

## HIGHLIGHTS

### OBJECTIVES



- ▶ Enhancing the payment process and customer service experience for Thompson Rivers' 5,795 international student population.
- ▶ To grow international recruitment and conversion rates by providing admission letters faster resulting in students having more time to receive study permits and work with TRU staff on study plans.
- ▶ Enabling students to register sooner by reducing the amount of time for payments "to land" at the University and be applied to students' accounts. Unidentified payments are held in a general ledger account awaiting either staff research or student's call to locate where and how to apply funds.
- ▶ Improve the Finance Office's reconciliation process for faster accounting and more accurate crediting of outstanding items from its clearing account for student payments.

### CHALLENGES



- ▶ Identifying how to apply payments received when the student or their family members do not provide sufficient information to the school.
- ▶ Complying with the numerous rules and regulations that govern payment handling and processing, including assurance of data security and privacy.

### SOLUTIONS



- ▶ Activation of an innovative international payment solution alternative, seamlessly integrated with the University's student information system, ellucian Banner, using a "plug and play" model that required little to no customization of baseline Banner.

## PARTNERING WITH THOMPSON RIVERS UNIVERSITY FOR RESOLVING PAYMENT DATA GAPS

### THE CHALLENGE WITH "MYSTERY PAYMENTS"

The main challenge of international wire transfers is the time frame from when the wire transfer is initiated to when it is deposited and applied to student accounts.

The two primary reasons for these delays are: International banking wire processes and payment transfers arriving to the University without required student information. These payments with missing data, termed "mystery payments" by Thompson Rivers University's finance officers, cost the University several weeks of manual data matching to settle payments into the correct student accounts.

Thompson Rivers University (TRU) student information system, ellucian Banner, often receives these "mystery payments" from international students, or their family members, with little or no information on how to apply and credit funds. Moreover, the inability to process these payments prevents students from registering for classes since TRU requires payment of tuition before permitting a student to make their course selections.



**THOMPSON  
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- ▶ TRU receives the funds within 48 hours of student payments to **PayMyTuition**.
- ▶ Payments are automatically matched to student accounts, thus avoiding manual entry into Banner and reducing possible data entry errors.
- ▶ The elimination of posting multiple daily transactions by batching payments into a single entry, has eased the reconciliation process.

## OUTCOMES



- ▶ Improved process for international payments allows students to register sooner, enabling individuals to get seats in required classes and complete their requirements for on-time graduation.
- ▶ TRU has found that its “mystery payments” that remained unidentified for up to six weeks have been eliminated.
- ▶ TRU changed its admissions letters to better communicate its new payment process so new students understood the procedures before billing. This messaging will minimize individual wire transactions, while reducing student/family “how-to-pay” questions, thus providing more proactive customer service.
- ▶ Time and resource savings for both the finance and international admissions office when working with TRU’s international student population supporting easier and on-time registration payments.
- ▶ Compliance with regulations regarding fraud and anti-money laundering was immediate since the school and vendor could determine the limitations for payment acceptance based on tuition amounts due.

To gain the desired efficiencies and student service enhancements to solve these challenges, TRU opted to shift from strictly receiving individual wire payments from its international students and outsource that segment of its tuition payment receipts to a third-party provider. The University sought a business partner with an understanding of the higher education marketplace and the innovative technology to seamlessly integrate into its student information system, ellucian Banner. In addition, TRU wanted a partner with the knowledge to navigate the numerous laws, rules and regulations governing the various payment alternatives to safeguard its students’ data and privacy.

## REGISTRATION EFFICIENCIES FOR A SUPERIOR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Thompson Rivers University needed to find a solution for faster and efficient processing of its international payments to assist its students’ ability for timely registration.

Delays in payment processing can lead to students missing enrollment dates for required courses and, in some cases, causing deferral of graduation dates.

Using a system with automated payment matching removes the risk of delays in payment processing thus providing a superior customer experience for the student.

The University not only benefits from faster cash flow and reduced costs but gains efficiencies from avoiding unnecessary student inquiries leading to better use of staff members’ time both in its finance and international programs offices.

## THE PAYMYTUITION DIFFERENCE

Implementation of the **PayMyTuition’s** payment application and its integration into Banner required a close working relationship between TRU’s IT department and the **PayMyTuition** technical support team.

Real time APIs were used to connect and communicate between the two systems, requiring little to no customization to TRU’s student information system, ellucian Banner, enabling an efficient and fast integration supporting a seamless go-live scenario.



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Even with the time needed for system testing and staff training, TRU was able to make its international payment engine and new business process available to students in less than six weeks.

School officials credit this seamless integration to having clear system documentation, a well-defined process map and efficient utilization of the test environment. This combined with adequate vendor support led to the success of the project's execution within a short turn-around window.

## THOMPSON RIVERS UNIVERSITY

Thompson Rivers University (TRU) is a public University with two (2) British Columbia campuses that offers 140 on-campus programs and 60 open learning programs, ranging from an ESL diploma to bachelor's and master's degrees. With more than 30,000 students, the University has 5,500+ international students from over 100 countries studying primarily at TRU's beautiful main campus in Kamloops, British Columbia.