



MSU AND CONNX SOLUTIONS CASE STUDY



Forbes Magazine calls Montclair State University "New Jersey's best public university". Located on a leafy, 250-acre campus in the town of Montclair, MSU is just 14 miles from New York City. It offers undergraduate, graduate and doctoral programs to more than 18,000 students, specializing in Arts, Education, Humanities, Science, Mathematics & Business.

Industry
Education

HQ
Montclair, NJ

Number of Students
20,022

Customer Since
2003



The MSU Story

Like most educational institutions, MSU relies on a legacy Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, in this case an education-focused RMS platform called ellucian™ from SunGard/Datatel. Like all legacy systems, MSU's was notoriously difficult when it came to extracting data in a useful and efficient way. Some departments had their own power users who were able to extract data themselves, but others were dependent on the small IT team for assistance, which meant an overload of requests and a growing lag time in responses. In 2002, VP of IT Dr. Edward Chapel realized that if the IT department was going to fulfill its mandate as an enabler for other departments to make data-driven decisions, it had to change how it delivers its services. Moving away from the legacy system was not an option at the time. The deci-

sion was made to find a way to extract the RMS data and load it into a more accessible data store.

Director of Enterprise Data Services Arathi Natarajan was tasked with finding a suitable ETL (Extract Transform-Load) tool. She identified two critical components that the solution would have to offer: the ability to connect to MSU's legacy system, and the ability to provide efficient updating and validation of the relational database so the required reports would be timely and relevant. Relying on Google searches to identify possible solutions, Ms. Natarajan soon discovered CONNX, with its wide range of database drivers and its DataSync ETL platform.

"Nothing short of spectacular. CONNX is clearly oriented toward great software and great customer relationships. Not only do support requests get resolved quickly and cheerfully, but the CONNX team continuously demonstrates amazing receptivity and responsiveness to new feature requests and customer feedback."

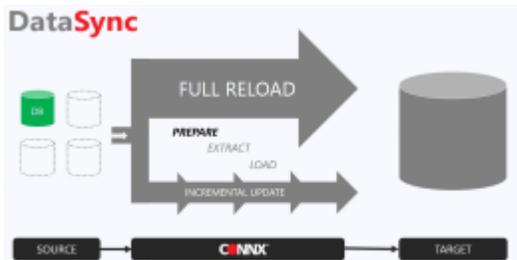
- Arathi Natarajan | Director of Enterprise Data Services MSU

DataSync

- ◆ Fast to Implement
- ◆ Easy to Use
- ◆ Versatile
- ◆ Scalable
- ◆ Minimizes Project Risk

InfoNaut

- ◆ Enterprise desktop querying and reporting tool.



customerid	customername	customeraddress	customercity	customerstate	customerzip
1	ALLWOOD	Always Open Duck Mart	77 Duggan Ave.	Provo	UT 84604
2	AMERIC	Andy's Continental Food Market	P.O. Box 209	Bellingham	WA 98226
3	AMTHB	Anthony's Beer and Ale	33 Neptune Circle	Clifton Forge	VA 24422
4	BARJL	Bar-J's Exports	Box 23938	London	VA 22421
5	BEKUS	Bergquist Scandinavian Grocery	47 S. Main St.	Seattle	WA 98104
6	BULSEL	Blue Lake Dairies & Creamery	210 Main St.	Post Springs	WA 98968

It didn't take long for CONNX to rise to the top of the potential vendor list. For starters, there were very few other companies that had a driver that worked with legacy RMS systems. More importantly, CONNX also had extensive experience with other educational institutions running on the very same platform. After detailed discussions with CONNX around MSU's unique needs and a successful proof of concept, Ms. Natarajan was convinced. "We started with a test run for the Financial Aid department, using a Microsoft® SQL Server setup and Crystal™ Reports," recalls Ms. Natarajan. "Once we showed what we could do, other departments – Finance, Admissions, Registrar, and Distance Learning – opened up to the benefits of changing how we delivered our data-related services. Everyone was astounded by the flexibility and speed of the new Operational Data Store."

Today, MSU uses three different CONNX solutions: an RMS database driver to connect the legacy system to the SQL-based Operational Data Store (in conjunction with IBM® InfoSphere® DataStage®); DataSync to manage the incremental refreshes of the SQL database; and the InfoNaut query tool for data validation and occasional direct access. Together, these solutions connect to a wide range of standard and custom designed applications that comprise the database backbone of MSU's Enterprise Software Services department, headed by Associate Vice President/Deputy CIO Carolyn Ortega.

The Results

MSU's ODS solution powered by CONNX has helped establish a high -performance model for data access that is easier to support and manage. More departments can access core data more quickly and efficiently, enabling them to make sounder decisions backed up by relevant data. Custom-built applications run more reliably by getting data feeds from the ODS. Some users need their data refreshed every fifteen minutes, others multiple times per day. Regardless of the frequency, CONNX meets these requirements with ease.

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When it comes to service and support from CONNX, Ms. Natarajan notes that her experience has been:

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responsiveness to new feature requests and customer feedback."

"I work with a wide range of IT vendors, and CONNX is a breed apart in these regards. It's such a pleasure working with them."

Access to your data when you want it, how you want it. CONNX does that one, and receives an honorary degree in Data Management.

About DataSync

DataSync is an ETL / data synchronization solution ideal for maintaining large enterprise data warehouses and operational data stores. DataSync allows data to be moved quickly and easily from any source to any target destination, regardless of platform or file structure. Its intuitive user interface and powerful scheduling function simplifies complete or incremental data synchronization, keeping target databases up to date with minimal effort, impact and latency.

About InfoNaut

CONNX InfoNaut Professional is an easy-to-use desktop querying and reporting tool that helps IT teams put the power of data access right where it is needed most: in the hands of the user. CONNX InfoNaut Professional lets users build and manage their own queries and reports, accessing the full scope of enterprise data contained in legacy relational and non-relational databases throughout the organization.

Edu Data Needs

Even in organizations as stable and predictable as higher education, data-driven decision making is vital to ensure ongoing success. Getting access to the right data easily and on time is just as challenging here as it is in the business world. For Montclair State University, the time had come to liberate mission critical data so more departments could use it to support their day-to-day operations. CONNX solutions were put in place to extract data from its legacy system and load it into a relational database to enable more flexible and more powerful reporting. Accessible, reliable and effective. That's higher education at MSU, and that's CONNX.



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About CONNX

CONNX Solutions is a leader in data access, migration, integration, virtualization, and replication. Their solutions enable quick, secure, and scalable SQL access to legacy, non-relational, relational, and cloud data wherever it resides, however it is structured, without any change to your core systems. CONNX is quick and easy to set up and use and offers easy standards-based tools that are accessible, flexible, and scalable.

Since 2001, CONNX solutions have been installed in more than 3,200 organizations worldwide and across a range of industries including government, manufacturing, education, technology, human resources, financial services, and telecommunications. CONNX's solutions unleash the power and value of information, providing organizations the ability to make confident, evidence-based business decisions.

Learn more: www.connx.com

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