

# Becoming a Cost-Conscious College

Your 4-step plan to transform  
into a role-model institution



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## Introduction

Every dollar counts when it comes to educating students, retaining faculty and staff, and keeping campuses looking and running their best. But most colleges and universities could make those dollars stretch a little further.

Fortunately, there's a path forward. In this e-book, we examine the cost-conscious college—an ideal institution that overcomes spend-management challenges by embracing purpose-built technology, streamlining processes, and remaining agile and ready for change. Along the way, we lay out steps that you can take to optimize spending and cash flow and make the most of every purchasing decision.

If you're ready to adopt a mindset of continuous improvement, then let's explore **4 steps that your institution can take to transform into a cost-conscious college.**





## Step 1: Choose transformative technology.

**Challenge:** With a hodgepodge of disconnected systems, the staff at our example institution spent a lot of time tracking down and transferring spending data from one application to the next. And without a central view of data or built-in policy controls, it was difficult to make informed decisions and prevent noncompliant spending.

**Solution:** By investing in adaptive, innovative technology solutions that are delightful to use, staff and faculty are empowered to spend within policy and without friction. And by integrating spending from multiple sources, the cost-conscious college can leverage a single view of all data to make confident spending decisions every time.

“ We now have a **full picture of our spend** and don’t have to look into two or three different systems to merge and verify the information. That also makes reporting and overall fiscal governance easier as well. Everything we need to see is in one place. ”<sup>1</sup>

– [University of Alabama](#)

### Benefits:



Easily connect data from ERP, HR, accounting, and other systems and apps for a single source of truth.



Capture invoices electronically to eliminate searching and sorting stacks of paper, PDFs, and emails.



Leverage real-time reporting, dashboards, and analytics to identify trends, aid in supplier negotiations, improve controls, and show spend wherever it occurs.

**Read our brochure**  
to explore the benefits of  
connected spend management.

[Learn more](#)



## Step 2: **Automate to reclaim the day.**

**Challenge:** Time-intensive paper-based invoice processes and spreadsheet-based expense report processes were introducing errors due to manual data entry. This meant staff and leadership couldn't trust the data, which forced them to react to emergent issues instead of thinking strategically.

**Solution:** Automated processes enable staff to improve accuracy and spend less time on invoice and expense management. By reexamining long-held practices and asking the right questions, the cost-conscious college now enjoys streamlined workflows from end to end.

### Key process questions

- Are there unnecessary steps that can be removed?
- Are there bottlenecks that can be optimized?
- Are there other ways to speed up or simplify the process?

## Benefits:



Make purchasing card (p-card) charges flow automatically into expense reports to reduce paper, manual data entry, mistakes, and waste.



Automate and connect every invoice payment, p-card charge, and expense report to speed up workflows, approvals, and audits.



Automatically apply unique rules and policies to enable policy-compliant spending and prevent fraud.

**Review our infographic**  
to learn more about automating  
the accounts payable process.

[Learn more](#)



## Step 3: Remain agile and ready for change.

**Challenge:** Staff were feeling overwhelmed with disconnected processes, departments, and systems. To further complicate matters, expense types were outdated, which led to confusion and noncompliant spend—a common problem in higher education where 47% of spending is categorized as “Other.”<sup>2</sup>

**Solution:** By reviewing standard processes, the staff worked as a team to identify and correct issues and free up time. And by clearly defining the institution’s expense policy and regularly revisiting expense categories, the cost-conscious college is able to provide clear direction to expense report filers, minimize noncompliant spending, and stay agile and ready for whatever comes next.



[Use our template to build a best-practice expense policy.](#)

“Automating our expenses and spend management across the institution gave us an opportunity to review our policies and procedures and evaluate what works and what doesn’t. Don’t be afraid to make those adjustments. Just because you’ve always done things a certain way doesn’t mean that’s the right way or the only way.”<sup>3</sup>

– [Bridgewater State University](#)

## Benefits:



Close the process gaps that create exceptions and continually improve workflows.



Set spend categories with clear expense types to keep reporting consistent and relevant.



Enable staff to focus on more strategic work and stay nimble in responding to crises.

**Read our tipsheet**  
for 4 simple steps to refresh  
your expense policy.

[Learn more](#)



## Step 4: **Share and learn with a like-minded community.**

**Challenge:** Siloed departments and cumbersome processes led to a lack of universal best practices across the institution. With no easy way to tap into a community of peers using the same tools, staff lacked guidance and resources and had to make do with workflows that seemed impossible to modernize.

**Solution:** Our cost-conscious college committed to transformation and became an institution to emulate. By embracing a culture of continuous improvement, deploying SAP Concur solutions, and joining the global SAP Concur Higher Ed Community, staff and leadership are able to keep costs in check, regularly improve processes, and share insights and best practices both internally and with other colleges and universities.

Become an SAP Concur customer and join our online community to benefit from:

- **600+** high-quality resources.
- **10K+ conversations** with peers and experts.
- **100K+ total members** with 278 in higher ed.

### **Benefits:**



Connect with like-minded peers and experts.



Browse by product or forum and read informative posts and articles.



Find support and resources and get answers to questions.

### **Read our article**

to learn about a community-centric approach to financial efficiency.

[Learn more](#)



## Make the most of every purchasing decision.

Wherever you are on your spend-optimization journey, no challenge is too big. By choosing the right mindset, technology, partners, and community, you can boost budget compliance, increase efficiency, and reduce wasteful spend.

And you're not in this alone! With more than 30 years of experience, SAP Concur is trusted by leading colleges and universities to automate workflows and improve insight into spending. **Get in touch to learn how we can help you transform your institution into a cost-conscious college.**

Penn State University stays ready for what's next.<sup>4</sup>

- **Reduced costs** – By eliminating the need to scan receipts, one FTE has been moved to higher-value work.
- **Saved time** – By automating all p-card requests for more than 9,000 cardholders, university staff was able to work on more productive assignments.
- **Improved performance** – By reducing expense types from 1,000 down to 200, system performance has been optimized.

[Read the case study.](#)

Contact us today to learn more.







**Sources:**

1. “The University of Alabama Moved from Paper-Based Processes to Digital Expense and Invoice Management,” SAP Concur, 2021.
2. 2022 SAP Concur customer data.
3. “Managing Complex User-Driven Expenses Across a Changing Campus Landscape,” Campus Technology, Sponsored by SAP Concur, 2022.
4. “Penn State University and SAP Concur Solutions: A Study in Academic Achievement,” SAP Concur, 2021.

**About SAP Concur**

SAP Concur is the world's leading brand for integrated travel, expense, and invoice management. Driven by a relentless pursuit to simplify and automate everyday processes, the solutions guide employees through business trips, move authorized charges directly into expense reports, and automate invoice approvals. By integrating near real-time data and using AI to analyze transactions, businesses can see what they're spending, improve compliance, and avoid possible blind spots in the budget. SAP Concur is imagining a world where travel and expenses practically manage themselves, helping businesses run at their best every day. Learn more at [concur.com](https://www.concur.com) or the [SAP Concur blog](#).

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