

University of Central Missouri

At the Center of it All

- Warrensburg, Missouri
- Public university
- Founded: 1871
- Enrollment: 11,200
- Featured TouchNet® technology: U.Commerce® (Payment Gateway, Bill+Payment, Cashiering, Marketplace, U.Commerce Dashboard), PayPath® Convenience Fee Service, PIN & PINless Debit

When the Princeton Review names you one of the best colleges in the Midwest four years running, you must be doing something right. In the University of Central Missouri's case, it's a lot of things.

Student-faculty ratio, affordability and number of degree options are just a few. As Missouri's lead institution for professional technology, UCM is committed to acquiring and utilizing technology to enhance the university's comprehensive educational mission. TouchNet has been a central part of that commitment.

Gateway to Good Things

Perhaps no one is more qualified to speak to the benefits of Central Missouri's investment in commerce technology than Director of Student Accounts Donna Bodenhamer. She has worked at the university for the last quarter-century, on the finance side for all but two of those years.

She moved into her current position in 2002, the year UCM first offered electronic payment through its legacy student accounting system. TouchNet Payment Gateway was the engine that made it possible. Four years later, in conjunction with an ERP implementation, the university opted to complete its U.Commerce package and purchase Bill+Payment, Cashiering and Marketplace.

"We had so much success with Payment Gateway, and we liked what we saw in the other products. We knew they could enable and enhance other processes," Bodenhamer said. "Plus, TouchNet was already a partner with our ERP. It was easy to get off the ground because everything was already integrated."

Paying the Bills

Today, nearly 11,000 transactions and \$8.5 million in tuition/fee revenue are moving through TouchNet Bill+Payment, rather than in person through the business office. Students and parents can conduct their campus business anytime, day or night.

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"We don't have the lines to make payments or pick up refunds anymore," she said. "And you can actually get through to someone on the phone." Why? Because 93 percent of students use the system, 37 percent have an Authorized User on file, and 75 percent have eRefund profiles established that enable refunds to be deposited directly into their chosen bank accounts.

Bill+Payment also allowed UCM to offer students a convenient payment plan option, one that's easily managed and an additional revenue source for the university.

Cashing In, Out

Thanks to TouchNet Cashiering, UCM converts more than 11,000 paper checks to ACH these days, out of the 15,000 they receive. Bodenhamer says the school saves many thousands annually on check handling, while the reduced demand on cashiers has enabled her to reduce staff through attrition, redefine some job descriptions and even combine some duties with the financial aid office.

"This has opened up a whole new customer service avenue for us," she said. "Our cashiers have turned into first-line customer service reps, people who are trained in financial aid and understand the process from start to finish. They can't award financial aid, but they can help students through the process. They can actually solve

problems instead of process payments all day. Everyone is happier."

Free of Fees

During the first few years of online bill presentation, UCM accumulated some hefty credit card processing fees, even when some of the transactions were debit-based. That all changed when it implemented TouchNet's PayPath Convenience Fee Service.

"We used to budget \$300,000 to \$400,000 for credit card expenses, and it was going up every year," she said. "We no longer have those costs, and we're able to put that money back into the general fund."

Credit card payments have been on a steady decline ever since, while the university has enabled three alternative and economical payment paths. Today, 90 percent of online payments are made via the low-cost ACH, and PIN and PINless debit payments are increasing year after year.

Mastering the Marketplace

Bodenhamer said with more campus departments jumping on the eCommerce wagon, TouchNet Marketplace gives them a powerful but easy-to-use platform for setting up and conducting business online. Alumni, parking, housing, event registration ... all are plugged into Marketplace uPay sites, securing and streamlining payment channels across campus.

The university's Harmon College of Business has even found a way to get students in on the action. Each semester, juniors in the required Integrated Business Experience class form mock companies to develop, produce, finance and market products they create. Student companies with names like "IB Mo Dry" sell items like UCM-IU-goed beach towels. Whether it's stadium seats, bobbleheads, posters or coolers, the products are now sold, shipped and inventoried through Marketplace uStores. All profits are donated to Warrensburg-area charities.

"They have given more than \$150,000 in just five years," Bodenhamer said. "Sure, it's another sales channel for the business students, but really it's a valuable tool for them to learn how to handle online payments and how the credit card industry works."

For Bodenhamer and Central Missouri, whatever possibilities emerge in the marketplace of ideas, she feels like the institution is well-equipped to make the most of them.

"When I travel to conferences now, I no longer need to visit all the vendor booths to see what they have," Bodenhamer said. "With TouchNet, I have everything I need."

THE COMPLETE APPROACH

TouchNet provides a Complete Approach for colleges and universities wanting to unify and centralize campus-wide commerce transactions. TouchNet's cloud-based technology platform includes multi-channel capabilities and extensive integration with leading ERP and student information systems as well as the many independent merchants operating on campus. Today, hundreds of schools serving millions of students use the TouchNet platform.

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A **Global Payments** Company
15520 College Blvd.,
Lenexa, KS 66219 USA
+1.913.599.6699
touchnet.com