

# San Francisco State University saves over \$40,000 per year on application processing costs



SAN FRANCISCO  
STATE UNIVERSITY

How Liaison's UniCAS™ helped the University escape “the dark ages of manual processing”

## ➔ SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY'S CHALLENGE

### “All Over the Place” Applications

Prior to joining a Centralized Application Service (CAS™), the over 90 graduate programs across 62 academic departments at San Francisco State University (SFSU) had used an “antiquated online application system that didn't allow for any document uploads, real robust communication or ways to engage the applicant pool,” recalls Associate Dean for the Division of Graduate Studies Noah Price.

Prospective students would first apply to the Division of Graduate Studies office and subsequently to individual academic programs, meaning they'd “have to prepare those two packages and then send them the old-fashioned way through the mail,” according to Price.

“A lot of students didn't really pay for tracking, so there was no mechanism by which they could track the status of their application materials being received,” he adds.

Further, the application materials collected by SFSU's various graduate departments were unsecured as well as unattached to the University's Student Information System (SIS).

“It was crazy and all over the place, and there was no real security to protect the integrity of the documents,” says Price.

SFSU's graduate program faculty, he says, “really wanted something from a central office to handle the graduate admission application in the modern era. I feel we were definitely working in the dark ages.”

**“When we're walking across campus, we hear some of these faculty just shout out about how much they love the CAS and their experience with it. They really are happy with it.”**

- Noah Price, Associate Dean for the Division of Graduate Studies, San Francisco State University

## 📁 RESULTS

Using a CAS, SFSU was able to:

- **Provide 10% annual savings on administrative costs** through a newly paperless system that enabled the University to employ less than half as many student assistants for clerical work.
- **Ignite a strategic transformation** in which admissions staffers realigned their positions to focus on higher-level responsibilities such as academic advising and student support.
- **Accelerate the admissions process** by empowering faculty members to make quicker decisions on applications.

## ⚡ LIAISON'S SOLUTION

### A University-wide Paperless Revolution

When SFSU learned of the 23-campus California State University (CSU) network's plans to introduce Cal State Apply — a system based on UniCAS™, the university-wide version of Liaison's discipline-specific CAS platform — the Division of Graduate Studies couldn't jump at the opportunity soon enough.

In fact, SFSU's physical therapy and nursing programs had already been using discipline-specific CASs.

"We were super eager," says Price. "We were ready to go the second we could start implementing Cal State Apply, and we hit the ground running."

From June to August 2017, Price's division proceeded to meet with nearly every single graduate program at the University to assess their needs on document collection, application questions and prompts for letter of recommendation writers. Then, SFSU set up new application portals for its graduate programs — putting a merciful end to those "dark ages" of manual processing.

"It has pretty much transformed our admissions process," Price says. "We're basically 100% paperless, which is fantastic."

### ✓ SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY'S OUTCOME

#### A Groundswell of Cost Savings

During 2018, the University's first year of implementing Cal State Apply, Price reveals that SFSU spent 10% less on supplies and services than in 2017. "We don't have to buy as much paper to print all of the documents that go with the admissions process," he explains. "We do it all online now through Cal State Apply and our SIS; I think those systems work really well together. That's pretty significant for us because we have a very small operating budget."

Before Cal State Apply, there was so much admissions-related paperwork flying across campus between academic departments that SFSU needed to hire seven student assistants in order to manage the substantial clerical workload. Now, the University is down to three student assistants, saving an estimated \$40,000 annually on labor. Additionally, some admissions staffers' jobs have been realigned and "fundamentally altered for the better," Price says.

"It has been a transformational implementation," he says. "My team can focus on the less transactional interactions with students and more on the academic advising, the student support. We're engaged with students in a totally different way."

In a mutually beneficial outcome, faculty members have accelerated their decision times on applications, and applicants have reported that they enjoy the convenience of the new cloud-based system. Price, meanwhile, has witnessed significant implications across SFSU's graduate programs. Formerly, those programs experienced a disjointed landscape in which they needed to coordinate their admissions processes with the Division of Graduate Studies, creating complications such as the difficulty of organizing committee meetings with faculty members who only came to campus once or twice weekly. Now, institution-wide collaboration is seamless.

"The different departments don't have to create paper files. Now they can look at a rubric or an assignment and all weigh in from the comfort of their homes," says Price, who affirms that "we're building a strong foundation for the future to handle larger application volume and allow for growth."



### About San Francisco State University

San Francisco State University is a public university in San Francisco. As part of the 23-campus California State University system, the University offers 118 different bachelor's degrees, 94 master's degrees and five doctoral degrees along with 26 teaching credentials among six academic colleges.

**Looking to streamline the application process for all of your stakeholders? Contact Liaison to learn more about how a CAS can help.**

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