Industry – Post Secondary Education – For Profit Career Colleges (South College and Concord College)

Engagement – A For-Profit College, located in the southeastern U.S., was interested in expanding the number of campus locations and course offerings through the acquisition of another existing, successful For-Profit College. Brightwater was engaged to perform an assessment of the targeted College's IT Platform along with enabling Business and Academic processes that supported the ongoing operations of the college as well as its student enrollment and academic coursework in order to make recommendations regarding gaps, areas of improvement, and identify opportunities to achieve enhanced performance and/or cost savings through synergy between the two Colleges.

Background – The customer For-Profit College operated five (5) brick and mortar campuses across three (3) southeastern states and sought to expand its total number of locations and academic offerings. While organic growth was a consideration, the aggressive, multiple year growth plans were better served through the acquisition of an existing College. An opportunity was identified that represented adding 17 new locations in the mid-western part of the U.S. The potential acquisition appeared to operate with a compatible approach to education, offered the expanded programs of interest, and enjoyed a good reputation in the industry. The assessment purpose was to ensure that there really was compatibility and that the expansion could be done without the acquiring company to undue reputation and financial risk.

There was a small window period of opportunity for the acquisition that required the assessment to be performed in a 45-day timeframe.

Work Performed – The short timeframe was addressed by conducting the assessment almost entirely through the use of a set of tools and interviews that could be done virtually.   The areas covered during the assessment were IT, Business and Academic Processes (system enabled).

- The IT areas included:
    - IT Strategy/Structure
    - Infrastructure/Networks/Tech Environment
    - Applications (IT, Business, and Academics)
    - Hardware
- The Business & Academic Processes included:
    - Student – Recruit, Enroll, Teach, Place
    - Finance – Student, Business Operations (AP/AR/GL)
    - Regulatory/Compliance – Government Reporting
    - Tools – For Profit College Process Map Toolkit, Email, Conference Calls

Deliverables

- A written assessment of the targeted College's IT Platform and Business/Academic Processes was provided. This was presented in two forms-a written summary and a very detailed report that included, for each area of focus. The areas that were covered in detail were:
    - IT Infrastructure

- Cabling
- Routers, Switches, and Firewalls
- External Connectivity (e.g., Internet, Cloud)
- Wireless Connectivity
- Data Center
  - App Processing/Data Storage
    - Servers
    - SANs
    - NAS
    - Cloud
  - End User Hardware
    - Desktops
    - Laptops
    - Printers
    - Scanners
    - Smart Devices
    - Telephone System
  - Other IT Related Software
    - Help Desk
    - Languages
    - Version/Release Control
  - Application Software/Services for Key Processes
    - Finance
    - Recruiting
    - Enrollment
    - Teach/Learn
    - Graduate Placement/Tracking
  - IT Organization/Alignment
    - Recruiting
    - Staffing
  - Physical Security
- The detailed report addressed the following topics for each Function.
  - The Function
  - Description
  - Current State Assessment
  - Notes/Relevant Information for Consideration
  - Risks to Acquisition
  - Business Risk Rating (1-10)
  - Remediation
  - Cost Estimates to Remediate
  - Opportunity for Synergy w/Possible Savings
  - Recommended Timeframe to Accomplish

Outcome – There were no significant risks identified. And, in fact, there were several opportunities for synergies including a number of best practices and processes in the targeted College that could be of significant benefit to the acquiring College.   This included the opportunity to restructure several contracts to take advantage of volume purchasing for deeper discounts. Another area of opportunity/cost savings was consolidation of data centers and implementation of much more robust business continuity capability by implementing one of the existing ones as a failover site for business continuity purposes.

The acquiring College was highly complementary regarding the overall work and specificity of the final report. They indicated that it provided a blueprint that could be followed for success.