



Duquesne University empowers users by embracing eProcurement.

An eProcurement success story

Duquesne chose our eProcurement solution for the unmatched value it offered, while the university's users fell in love with its simple and intuitive shopping experience.

Julie Wetzel is the Assistant Director of Procurement and Payment Services at Duquesne. In 2017 the university decided to merge purchasing and accounts payable, meaning Julie's department now handles the entire procure-to-pay process for the university. Julie joined Duquesne shortly after the decision to implement Unimarket's eProcurement solution and she was closely involved in its rollout.

"Before the transformation, everything in purchasing was very slow and paper driven. For example, it probably took at least three days from the time an order was requested to the time it made it to the vendor. It was also very error prone," Julie says.

"We were spending a lot of time making sure that the right people were signing off on orders. In an institution of our size and complexity, it can be almost impossible to ensure that all paper purchase orders are signed off by the person with the right authority. The same applies with budgets — in a paper-based system it's really difficult to be sure which budget should be charged," she adds.

Duplication of data entry was a major drain on time and resources and one of the key problems Duquesne wanted to address. Users would have to type up a requisition, send it by interoffice mail to procurement, and the procurement team would then have to enter that same information into the ERP system. And that was just the start. "Then getting it to the vendor was always a challenge. You either had to fax it, call it in, or sometimes email it, if you could find the right email address. Time intensive is the best way to describe it," says Julie.

After assessing several eProcurement solutions, Duquesne selected Unimarket because of its simplicity and lower cost compared to other options. As a mid-sized university taking its first steps in eProcurement, choosing a solution partner that had a track record of success with higher education institutions was the sensible choice.



Duquesne University is one of the largest and most successful Catholic higher education institutions in the United States.

Location: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Enrollment: 9,000+

ERP: Ellucian Banner

Number of Unimarket users: 1,000+ across nine schools

There was a little skepticism before Duquesne made the transition to eProcurement. People fell into one of two camps: some were excited about the benefits a digital transformation would bring, while others were reluctant to break from how things had always been done.

"That's understandable because it was the first transformation on this scale that the university had seen in a while. There was inevitably some nervousness," Julie concedes.

The implementation

Although cost was the deciding factor in choosing Unimarket, Duquesne realized that it was getting more value than it originally anticipated as the implementation progressed. "We gave general guidance and took part in the testing. Apart from that, Unimarket took care of everything," remembers Julie.

Duquesne rolled out the solution in stages, starting with departments with high-order volumes like science, facilities, and IT. "We realized that each department had its own unique characteristics and quirks, so it made sense to tackle them one by one to manage our time a little better and to give each department the attention they needed," Julie says. By taking this approach, the rollout proceeded smoothly across the remaining departments.

The nervousness some felt before the transformation washed away once the Unimarket solution was up and running. "Now, with the Unimarket platform, it's basically self service. Users have fallen in love with it. People see how intuitive it is and how much more quickly things can be done.

"Users like being able to go in and look at their orders. Previously, the whole campus struggled with a lack of visibility when it came to procurement. Only purchasing had access to

the records. Everyone else would have to go through our office if they had any questions or needed to see an old purchase order," Julie explains. The average time it took to process an order decreased from more than two days to just a few hours.

Duquesne was also delighted with the reporting features the Unimarket solution offered. "We don't have to build reports from scratch, so that has significantly cut down our time from start to finish. It's made our entire department so much more effective and efficient," says Julie.

The university started with the core Unimarket eProcurement solution and added invoice automation functionality after 18 months. That freed up Duquesne's accounts payable team from a lot of manual invoice processing and gave them the opportunity to focus on valuable work in other areas. "The use of eInvoicing for some of our high-volume vendors has been a huge benefit for us," says Julie.

"We saw a lot of synergies between procurement and accounts payable. We collaborated so closely with them on a daily basis that it made sense to combine as a single team under one supervisor that could monitor the entire process," she adds.

A true partnership

Jumping into eProcurement from a paper-based system can feel a little overwhelming for organizations. That's why Duquesne found working with the highly experienced and collaborative team from Unimarket so reassuring.

"I've never had a partnership quite like the one with Unimarket. It really is more than a business relationship. I think of the Unimarket team as colleagues on campus. They're easy to work with but they also challenge us, and we feel free to challenge them. They've truly made us a better organization by sharing their experience and their knowledge of best practices. They really pushed us to improve our processes and make them better," says Julie.

Duquesne and Unimarket approached the implementation with an agile mindset, constantly learning and iterating. They tried new ways of doing things, comfortable in the knowledge that it could be changed or adapted to their needs.

"We didn't feel stuck if the choices we made at the start didn't work out and we learned it was okay to try new ways of doing things. The Unimarket team was always there to guide us if we weren't sure how to proceed," concludes Julie.

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Julie Wetzel, Assistant Director of Procurement and Payment Services at Duquesne University

Results



71% of orders approved in under five hours



Greater visibility for users



Supported the merger of procurement and accounts payable



Greater efficiency for procurement and accounts payable



Easy creation of management reports

Want to know more?

Visit our website for more eProcurement success stories and to discover how we help schools like yours get procurement done right.



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