Saint Vincent College: Preparing Graduates for the Real World with SAP® Business One
When it wanted to deepen students’ knowledge about how companies use IT to support operations, Saint Vincent College contacted the SAP® University Alliances program. SAP donated a collegewide license for the SAP Business One application – a complete, integrated business management solution that students could learn quickly. Today, it’s used in labs that give students hands-on experience with a leading enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution – broadening both their business understanding and career opportunities.
Saint Vincent College: A dynamic place of learning

Founded in 1846, Saint Vincent College is an educational community located in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, that values the liberal approach to life and learning. With four schools, each with a variety of departments and major and minor programs, Saint Vincent serves nearly 2,000 students each year seeking undergraduate or graduate degrees in a variety of areas. It focuses on providing personal attention and the highest quality educational resources to help students maximize their academic and professional goals.

Saint Vincent’s educational programs have earned national recognition – and that’s one of the things that attracted Robert A. Markley Jr., Latrobe Specialty Steel sponsored instructor at the college, to leave his successful career in IT to join the faculty. “I started my career at PricewaterhouseCoopers and then went on to found two regional consulting firms that specialized in delivering ERP solutions,” explains Markley. “When I was ready for a career change, I wanted to leverage my experience to make a difference – and teaching has given me this opportunity.”

Saint Vincent College:

- Undergraduate and graduate students: 1,929
Bringing management information systems to life for students

Markley teaches accounting information systems (AIS) and management information systems (MIS) at Saint Vincent College’s Alex G. McKenna School of Business, Economics, and Government. “I’d been teaching AIS and MIS the traditional way for a few years – through lectures, QuickBooks, and a simple database. But the approach was largely theoretical, rather than practical,” he explains. “I wanted to deepen students’ understanding of how information systems are truly the backbone of companies today – and to do this, I needed to expose them to a real-world business management system.”

Markley needed a comprehensive solution that covered ERP, supplier relationship management, customer relationship management, and basic reporting in a seamless, integrated manner. Equally important, the software had to be very easy for students to learn.

“The user interface of SAP Business One is so incredibly easy to understand and use. It’s perfect for new users like our students.”

Robert A. Markley Jr., Latrobe Specialty Steel Sponsored Instructor, Saint Vincent College
SAP Business One: The perfect fit

As an experienced architect and implementer of ERP solutions for large businesses, Markley was very familiar with the leading solution providers and the software they offer. After evaluating all the options, he chose the SAP Business One application.

“Of all of the SME [small and medium enterprise] software solutions out there, it best fit our needs,” comments Markley. “SAP Business One offered the comprehensive functionality, centralized data, and ease of use that we needed in a classroom-friendly business management application. And because key functionality was integrated out of the box, I could use it to illustrate the need for centralized, trusted data and integrated business processes spanning multiple departments.”

Markley reached out to SAP and learned about the SAP University Alliances program, which offers faculty access to SAP software and educational resources to enrich their curricula and boost the number of highly skilled graduates. The program aims to foster the development of connections among university leaders and students, SAP customers and partners, and SAP internal experts.

“SAP Business One gave us everything we needed to teach students about the value of information systems – but in a very unintimidating, user-friendly package.”

Robert A. Markley Jr., Latrobe Specialty Steel Sponsored Instructor, Saint Vincent College
Ease of use makes adoption effortless

Markley and a systems administrator at Saint Vincent College implemented SAP Business One – and they were amazed at how fast and easy it was to do. “By going with standard functionality, we were able to deploy it in a computer lab in less than two days,” Markley relates. Adoption has been effortless; he simply reviews the navigation in class for 15 minutes, and the students take it from there.

Because of the software’s ease of use, Markley can design a variety of hands-on, real-world exercises that students can complete in a week or two with no prior experience with SAP Business One. “I still discuss key concepts in class, of course, but these lab-based exercises reinforce those concepts by bringing them to life,” he explains. For example, to help them understand how customer quotes eventually become cash in the bank, he has students set up customers, create quotes, input orders, create invoices, and more.

Markley has developed a hands-on curriculum, including transactional exercises, an audit case study, and a configuration case study. And he shares his curriculum with professors at other SAP University Alliances member campuses around the world through the online SAP University Alliances community (www.uac.sap.com). Saint Vincent College was asked by SAP to offer additional training to students and the opportunity to become certified with SAP Business One. The college designed a program for students in their junior year that involved self-study and a hands-on workshop, after which they work for an SAP partner and sit for their certification exam in the fall of their senior year. The intent is to prepare these students for rewarding careers as implementation consultants with SAP Business One.
Making a difference by preparing students for the real world

By incorporating SAP Business One into his MIS and AIS classes, Markley gives students hands-on experience with an ERP system from the market leader in enterprise application software. “The response from students and their parents has been great – their overall comprehension of key concepts is better,” he notes. “Equally important, it’s helping us stand out and secure excellent internships for our students.”

Many graduating students have said that their experience with SAP Business One has helped them compete more effectively for jobs. This is particularly true for students like Claudia Arrunategui, who participated in the SAP Business One certification program. She was hired right after graduation by Vision33, an award-winning SAP gold partner and leading reseller of SAP Business One and the SAP Business ByDesign® solution to small businesses and midsize companies. She’s now working as a consultant on implementations of SAP Business One.

“Consulting companies actively recruit from Saint Vincent College because of its certification program,” explains Arrunategui. “Getting through the program was a challenge because I had to do lots of extra work on top of regular classes – but it was so worth it. If I’d only had a degree in general business management, I don’t think I would have gotten this opportunity. Going through the certification program definitely helped me get hired quickly and be productive from day one.”

“Some of our highest-paid graduates have been part of our SAP Business One certification program. We’re looking forward to growing the program.”

Robert A. Markley Jr., Latrobe Specialty Steel Sponsored Instructor, Saint Vincent College
Expanding use of SAP Business One in the classroom

Saint Vincent College has a collegewide license for SAP Business One, so other professors are free to incorporate the software into their classes as well. “We’re definitely starting to see more of a buzz about it, and we’re starting to see better adoption across our school,” adds Markley. “It is an excellent complement to many of our business, accounting, and management classes.”

This summer, Markley plans to upgrade to the latest version of the software and enhance reporting by deploying SAP BusinessObjects™ business intelligence solutions. “I’d like students to be able to generate more visual reports so they can see how centralized data and analysis helps businesspeople see trends, identify problems, and make decisions.”

“Using SAP Business One, we’re giving our students hands-on, practical skills in applying state-of-the-art enterprise software to real-world business scenarios.”

Robert A. Markley Jr., Latrobe Specialty Steel Sponsored Instructor, Saint Vincent College