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# How It All Comes Together: A Cloud-Based Enrollment System in Action

## A real-world example of how the cloud enables people to excel.



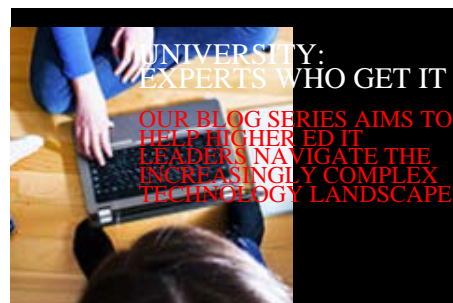
by [Bob Burke](#)

Bob Burke is president of FolderWave, Inc., a cloud-based company offering products and services designed to significantly improve complex, high-volume, time-dependent process and data management operations in many areas of higher education. Bob can be reached at [bob@folderwave.com](mailto:bob@folderwave.com).



by [Arthur Mahoney](#)

Arthur Mahoney is the former director of enrollment services at Northeastern University, where he implemented numerous administrative systems and was a major contributor to the design of their strategic enrollment research efforts. Having worked in both information technology and administration at Northeastern for more than 25 years, he is now the principal of HomePort Consulting, providing support for higher education in the areas of enrollment technologies, analytic and business processes.



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- [Part 1: How Cloud Computing Is Transforming College Admissions Operations](#)
- [Part 2: What Cloud Computing Means to College Applicants](#)
- [Part 3: What Cloud Computing in Admissions Means for Analytics, ROI and IT](#)

*In this concluding segment, we show a cloud-based recruitment system from four separate vantage points: that of a prospective student, an admissions counselor, an operations manager and a senior administrator. These four individuals have at least one thing in common: All are associated with a hypothetical university; one we will call HU for short.*

### THE PROSPECTIVE STUDENT

Pat is a high school senior in the midst of her search for the perfect college. She is an excellent student who did well on the SATs, and she excels on the softball team and volunteers with the elderly. In addition, she's a talented oboist who has won state and national music competitions. As for the future, she wants to be a speech therapist.

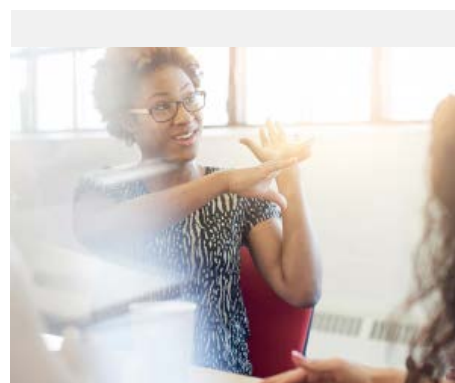
Pat has been receiving information from HU since she was a sophomore, when her name was provided to the institution via the Student Search process. She has gotten occasional targeted communications from HU ever since and has had enough interest to send them her junior-year SAT scores. They were high enough that HU's recruitment system flagged Pat as an extremely desirable candidate.

While this is all good, Pat considers HU well beyond her reach. Her father recently had a stroke, so her mother must work double shifts as a waitress to support the family. There's simply no way Pat can ask her mom to go further into debt to pay for college.



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### THE ADMISSIONS COUNSELOR

Bob Rafferty is an admissions counselor at HU. He's held this position for about a year; previously, he worked in the admissions office as a student employee. Bob performs a number of tasks for his job, including traveling to high schools and college fairs, conducting interviews and evaluating his share of the 25,000 applicants vying for 3,000 available seats in the freshman class. He is also the office liaison for the music department and is in charge of communication management.

### THE OPERATIONS MANAGER

Cassie Lefevre's duties are twofold: She ensures that all applications get equitably reviewed as quickly as possible, and she is the main go-to person when students and their families have questions or challenges.

### THE DEAN

Brant Kline is the dean of enrollment. Among many other challenges, he must ensure that the various programs at HU are not oversubscribed while making certain that student enrollment is sufficient to meet the institution's goals. In addition, he sees to it that every student's on- and off-campus experience reflects positively on the institution. Kline monitors the productivity and academic profile of the prospective student pool and frequently relays trends to HU's president and board, who have access, via the web, to the same daily reports he sees every day.

### PERCEPTIONS IN NEED OF CLARIFICATION

As a prospective student, Pat becomes part of Bob's caseload. He's been orchestrating content and monitoring outcomes of the targeted messages she's been receiving during her junior year. Just recently, the system flagged her as a promising candidate who had not yet submitted an application. Bob includes Pat as part of a workflow that encourages students to apply and reminds them about HU's admissions website — a site actually supported by HU's cloud-based partner — where they can learn more about HU and submit an application.

Pat is both excited and discouraged by what the site reveals. The urban campus is lovely and the speech therapy program is one of the best, but the price tag is prohibitive. Out of curiosity, she flags an interest in that major and then, with regret, focuses on her application to a nearby state school, an easy commute from home.

Back in the admission's office, Bob sees that Pat has opened his email



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and visited the site. The system has automatically flagged her to receive the information she requested about the speech therapy program; that is followed by a personalized email containing several links to the College of Health Science website.

The next day, Bob extracts a list of potential music students for the band director's mailing. Pat's Student Search information shows a strong interest in music, so she's included on the list, which is automatically incorporated into her mailing sequence.

### A FACE-TO-FACE ENCOUNTER

A few weeks later, Bob generates invitations for the Southeast Regional College Night. Pat receives an invitation and goes to the HU website to RSVP, telling herself she's really attending to get more information about the state school.

That night, almost in spite of herself, she finds her way to the HU table. When she gives her name to Bob, he quickly checks her in on his tablet and scans her profile and then asks if she has any questions. Noticing her reticence, he takes a chance and asks, "Do you mind telling me why you haven't applied? It seems we offer everything you're looking for: one of the best speech therapy departments in the country as well as strong athletic and music programs."

Pat is a bit rattled to discover he knows so much about her. But Bob seems truly interested, so she tells him of her financial constraints. Bob reassures her that HU is committed to assisting those who qualify for admission and suggests that her mother submit an application for financial aid. While talking with Pat, Bob flags her record to immediately receive information on financial aid as well as the athletics and fine arts programs.

Pat goes home and submits the web-based admissions application before she goes to bed. The next morning, she receives account information for the HU application portal and a personalized email from Dean Kline, thanking her for applying and encouraging her to visit HU's campus.

At intervals spaced to sustain her interest, Pat gets emails from the chair of the music department and the coach of the women's softball team. The embedded videos are so exciting that Pat dreams night and day of attending HU. She works hard on her essay about assisting a speech therapist at a nearby nursing home. Three days later, she submits her

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essay and recommendations via HU's application portal.

### BEHIND THE SCENES

Let's stop this story for a moment and discuss the details of what is going on in the background. Most of the communications, with the obvious exception of face-to-face discussion, are automatically assigned to prospective students, based on their expression of interest and subsequent actions. For example, the thank-you emails, the links and the videos were all triggered by the coding on Pat's record, whether self-provided, supplied by a third party or flagged by her recruiter, Bob.

It took Bob several weeks over the summer to design the message content and sequencing that drives these communications, but since setting up these parameters in the system, there has been little overhead to maintain them. This is of particular help to Cassie Lefevre, who, when the entire business process was redesigned for the new, paperless system, had redirected her staff from addressing brochures and assembling manila folders to helping students and families. The application status check on the admissions portal has eliminated most routine phone calls, so Lefevre's staff can focus on special circumstances.

Eight admissions counselors have just over five months to render decisions. Using the system, Cassie monitors and balances their productivity while ensuring that academic and subjective ratings are consistent. Because she can compare the prior year's activity to the current cycle, she's comfortable her team will make their deadline. Cassie is feeling good about things when a colleague forwards her an urgent phone call.

### MORE THAN JUST A PROCESS

The caller is Pat's mom, who is worried that her daughter will be admitted to HU, only to learn she can't afford to attend. Cassie is quick to point out that many students take advantage of federal and state grants in addition to the school's financial aid and work-study programs. She reassures Mom that a student of Pat's caliber, who has such significant need, stands a good chance of being offered a generous financial package.

Cassie promises to send some links to student budgets and affordability options and informs Mom that if Pat decides to attend HU, she'll have aid for all four years, as long as her grades remain good. She flags Mom's parent record to receive the information and adds a private note

to Dean Kline about the discussion, highlights of which are stored as secure notes in Pat's record.

As Bob and his colleagues wind down the evaluation of thousands of applications, he keeps thinking about the young woman who said she couldn't afford to attend. Her essay and recommendations have arrived, completing her requirements and adding her to his evaluation queue. He's on the road but is able to review cases on the web, so he sits down late one night and reads what Pat has written.

Her compassion, tenacity and obvious intelligence impress Bob, and he's touched by the story of how an elderly woman with Alzheimer's, who hadn't spoken coherently for 10 years, would sing along with Pat. As he admits her, he flags her record as a candidate for a premier scholarship.

When the notification deadline arrives, Pat receives an email instructing her to check her HU account. Using her smartphone to access the portal, she learns that she has been accepted and that she is one of a small number of students to receive a full four-year scholarship. She reads the acceptance notification twice to be sure she isn't dreaming and then calls her mom at work to deliver the good news.

### THE FINAL ANALYSIS

You may be wondering why a story like this is included in a technology article. Perhaps it seems as if technology has taken second billing to the tale of a bright young woman whose dream came true. Perhaps you even wonder what point we're trying to make. Simply put, we'd like you to consider that, at every turn, the system enabled the people.


The counselor was able to work from any venue while maximizing his one-on-one experiences — not only with prospective students but also with faculty members whose programs he supports. The operations manager was able to redirect resources to student and family services while leveling counselor caseloads, ensuring equity and meeting deadlines, despite a burgeoning stream of applications. The dean was able to see the entire operation, and at a critical moment, the prospective student and her mom got the support they needed from caring individuals who had time to pay close attention to their plight.

The system was supported by a cloud-based partner that was responsive to its customers and worked with HU to develop functionality that permitted a customized business process focused on people and problem solving. The institution had not only the latitude to address

increasing application numbers but also the capacity to do so with greater equity and a life-changing personal touch.

That's what a world-class system should do: enable people to make a difference. So if technology seems the lesser part of this story, that's as it should be — the system has done its job.

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