

# Self-Service through the EMPOWER Web Portal

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## INTRODUCTION

Dr. Richard Whiteside, Vice President for Enrollment Management at Tulane University, states that the “millennial” generation fully expects its information and decision-making needs to be met by Internet-based services. Students entering higher education now are completely comfortable with the tools of the Internet – search engines, e-commerce, chats, IM & email, forums, etc. – and prefer these forms of communication. They demand immediate and around-the-clock access. Colleges are challenged to provide both the instructional and administrative tools required to service this generation of learners.

EMPOWER’s Web interface is an effective tool in providing the level of service students and staff members demand in a safe, stable and cost-effective manner.

## OVERVIEW

The EMPOWER Web Portal provides a direct link to the institution’s administrative database functions for prospective students, enrolled students, faculty, advisors, admissions officers, and development staff. It extends key services and information to any constituent with Internet access while fully preserving data integrity and security. The Web Portal takes advantage of the same logic and processing techniques used in the parallel on-campus functions. Furthermore, data access is “live” to the EMPOWER database so all information is current. (As appropriate, EMPOWER offers administrators the opportunity to verify input before the system formally writes the new data into the production database.)

Web presentation of data differs from the on-campus access to conform to the technical differences of browser-based systems and the expectations of users. Screens are laid out to support a wide variety of browsers and connectivity speeds. To support the casual user’s access needs, the Web Portal follows a simpler interface approach than would be desirable for the professional user. Naturally, only those functions that would be used by the target audiences in a remote setting are supported on the Web. (NOTE: Access to any display by any user is controlled via college policy and security access.) All modules of EMPOWER (Admissions, Records & Registration/Degree Audit, Financial Aid, Student Billing, Housing, Campus Security, and Alumni & Donor Development) all have appropriate Web access extensions. EMPOWER’s Web services are constantly enhanced to offer even more access options. This document will describe the Web services available for each functional area.

## **PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS AND APPLICANTS**

EMPOWER's support for the inquiry and application process through the Web is second to none. The key tool for this first formal contact with students is EMPOWER's fully user-configurable inquiry card and application development capability. Any authorized user can use the tools to set up unique inquiry cards or admissions applications. The number of such forms is unlimited so special "cards" and applications can support various programs, terms, services, etc.

The lay-out of the Web screens, the content, and the "look-and-feel" are under your control without IT programmer assistance. Defaults, required fields, and so forth are supported. Forms can be set to request virtually all admission data or very little. Labels and prompts are user-supplied so non-English forms can be offered (assuming character set support). Admissions essays and surveys can be attached to the application. Pre-questions can be set up to present a particular application or inquiry form based on the prospective student's answers. (For example, questions may guide a student to a particular program inquiry or grad/undergrad applications.)

In every case the college's rules and edits are supported; collected data always goes to the correct database position and updated data can be added to an existing application. All forms are checked for duplication and are held for validation to eliminate mischief.

Inquiring students or applicants can suspend completion of their forms to return at a later time. Permission to correct accepted forms is under your control. Preliminary access security is based on user-supplied information, but permanent ID numbers and passwords are assigned according to the college's policies. Application fees can be paid on-line via credit card, debit card, or check.

As student data is recorded into the database the student is placed into appropriate tracks and categories for admissions follow-up either in an automated process or through scheduled personal contacts. No applicant is ever "lost in the shuffle."

The college website can contain a link to EMPOWER's course catalog and class schedule information to provide this information to all visitors.

## **SIGN-ON WARNINGS**

Upon sign-on, a prospect or student is immediately alerted to any holds or unmet medical requirements. Holds are identified according to the department issuing the hold and the student is advised to meet with the appropriate department to deal with the matter. If a hold has an effect on registration, document access, or other Web-based services, those services are denied. Program medical requirements are flagged as missing, expired, or about to expire within 30 days to deal with recurring situations like CPR certifications.

## ADMISSIONS STUDENT SERVICES

Once a prospective student's application has been received and the admission action begins, the student will receive a permanent ID number and a password. At this point several resources can be made available to him/her at the discretion of the institution:

- Admissions Profile of applicant general information
- Financial Aid Award Letters and detailed aid status
- Interests and Activities reported
- Missing Document Display of required information not yet received both for the Admissions Office and the Financial Aid Office
- Fees paid and due
- Name, Address, Phone Number, password maintenance
- Contact my Admissions Counselor, Coach, Advisor

## ADMISSIONS STAFF SERVICES

Because Admissions Officers are frequent travelers, EMPOWER offers them extensive access to data while "on the road." It is no longer necessary to print and carry prospect files or use office hours to keep records up to date. In addition to all of the resources available to prospective students detailed above, staff members are supported with:

- Counselor To-Do List as both a reminder of next steps for students and as a remote means of initiating system generated letters or email
- Travel Report details high schools, events and prospective students a counselor plans to visit. Drill-down functions provide details of student interests and the progress of admittance
- Communications Log provides a complete history of contacts with a prospect and allows new contact information to be entered
- Applications Status Query details the progress of the application, data collected regarding prior education, degrees and test scores
- Term Information Display and Maintenance provides a complete picture of the prospect's admissions profile and updates can be posted remotely
- Workflow Processing sets in motion the next admissions steps for a prospect or for a selected group of prospects
- No-Response Query of prospects who require further follow up
- Name Look Up is an easy way to find contact information for any person in the database
- View Submitted Forms allows a counselor to check on potential students who are at the beginning of the process and are not yet formally in the database

## FINANCIAL AID

The Web Portal offers two specific on-line services in support of financial aid:

- Financial Aid Award Letters are presented on the Web for student acceptance or rejection of particular awards. The form spells out the type of aid and specific award program including the current award year totals. The award letter includes:
  - Budget data
  - Estimated Family Contribution
  - Unmet need calculation
  - Awarded funds
  - Remaining need
  - Decline Aid check box
  - Signature and date line
- Financial Aid Missing Documents report. This report queries the communications log to identify any Financial Aid documents which have not been returned within the requested time period set in the communications timetable.

## STUDENT SERVICES FOR RECORDS AND REGISTRATION

Current students can obtain most of what they need from the registrar's office through the Web Portal. Students can:

- Choose classes from their pre-registration plan and from classes at large.
  - Class registration
  - Add/Drop
  - Search and choose by department, course, section, time, meeting days, instructor, and location.
  - Make payments by credit or debit card and electronic check
  - Full edits (holds, instructor permissions, requisites, seat counts, etc.) apply in real time.
  - Restricted registration schedule (seniors first, for example)
- Check grades in real time as instructors post them
- Check class details such as meeting time changes
- Query the course catalog and the class schedule
- Review their current class schedule
- Review full academic history (non-transcript format)
- Review their current degree audit data
- Request and review "what if" scenarios to determine the impact of academic program changes
- Request transcripts

- Personal information review (update optional)
  - Name, address, phone
  - Demographic information
  - Employment
  - College degrees
  - Miscellaneous data
  - Academic programs, majors, etc. by term
- Identify and Contact advisor
- Hold and medical requirement notification at sign-on

## **FACULTY SERVICES FOR RECORDS AND REGISTRATION**

Faculty and staff have Web access to:

- Class rosters including
  - Names
  - Class standing
  - Credit/non-credit status
  - Major
  - Advisor
  - Phone number
  - Withdrawal notice
  - Email address and automated email to individuals or all class members
- Grade Rosters (mid-term and final)
- Attendance posting with daily quantitative scoring
- Class detail query
- Advisee listings, schedules, and general information access
- Surveys and Evaluations connected to classes which can be designated as required and which produce reports
- Workflow steps

## **STUDENT BUSINESS OFFICE ACCESS**

Students have access to their bursar's office accounts at any time. They can:

- Review their tuition account with access to all charges, payments, financial aid disbursements, and institutional loan agreements
- Review their entire account history
- Obtain 1098-T information
- Review the estimated tuition worksheet for future terms including, tuition, housing fees and financial aid planning
- Submit payments via credit card, debit card, or check

## **ALUMNI AND DONOR SERVICES**

If the college's alumni and donors are given Web access, EMPOWER enables them to:

- Update personal information
- Review their donation history and outstanding pledges

## **ALUMNI AND DONOR DEVELOPMENT STAFF SERVICE**

To support the information needs of the traveling alumni and donor development staff, EMPOWER provides access to full donor records including:

- Donation and pledge history
- Demographic and contact information
- Relationships
- College degrees
- General information
- Communication log of all prior contacts and mailings

## **HOUSING SERVICES**

Students can:

- Request on-campus housing
- Request a meal plan
- Inquire about current housing
- Inquire about current meal plan

## **CAMPUS SECURITY**

Students can request a vehicle sticker and/or parking. Public safety officers can inquire upon a student's campus vehicle registration.

## **GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES AND FUNCTIONS**

Administration of many Web Portal functions is managed through the Web interface including:

- Inquiry and application set up and maintenance
- Web Portal look-and-feel (style sheet)
- "News of the Day" posting

Users are assigned permission to general functions:

- Password maintenance
- Name look up (name, address, email, phone)
- Student listings by college, location, major, and minor; sorted by student or program name.
- Personal information review (update optional)
  - Name, address, phone
  - Demographic information
  - Employment
  - College degrees
  - Miscellaneous data
  - Academic programs, majors, etc. by term

## **WEB PORTAL SECURITY AND PERMISSIONS**

The EMPOWER Web Portal is protected from unwanted access in several ways:

- The native user and user group security provisions of EMPOWER apply to Web access. Administrators can enable access to any screen for any user or group of users and further define the access as read/write/modify as needed.
- Sign-on and password protections are specific to the Web Portal.
- SSL Certificate security is mandatory. This level of security assures that all Web activities are private and cannot be captured from the Internet.

