



## North Carolina State University College of Management

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### At A Glance:

- **Company:** North Carolina State University College of Management
- **Location:** Raleigh, North Carolina
- **Industry:** Education
- **Challenge:**
  - To find an ERP software package that gives students real-world experience with business processes — without giving faculty a real-world headache with updates, maintenance, and technical complexity
- **Results with NetSuite:**
  - Students able to learn end-to-end business processes, such as quote-to-cash, by completing projects in NetSuite
  - Professor not bogged down in technical issues — providing more time to focus on teaching and research
  - The hands-on experience students gain has made them more marketable with employers — and has helped place them in jobs
- **NetSuite Partner:**
  - Lohmueller and Associates, Inc.



*“We work with a broad range of clients that are all looking for students versed in contemporary technology like NetSuite. Programs like those offered at NC State College of Management get them prepared – and hired.”*

— *Judy Lohmueller, Vice President  
Lohmueller and Associates, Inc.*

### The Results:

Using NetSuite in the classroom, North Carolina State University's College of Management has taken an innovative approach to teaching its MBA and Master of Accounting students, and the payoff has been big — both for students and the school. MBA and Master of Accounting candidates not only get a better appreciation for how business processes work, but they gain first-hand experience with key technology, making them more marketable to employers. Such programs reflect the college's focus on the management of technology throughout the curriculum, a significant differentiator for the college. The college's undergraduate and graduate accounting programs both cracked the top 25 in last year's Public Accounting Report's Annual Professor Survey.

Since the College of Management began using NetSuite in the spring 2005 semester, 100 students have completed NetSuite-based projects, and the experience — and the skills they've picked up — has enabled some to land jobs. “We work with a broad range of clients that are all looking for students versed in contemporary technology like NetSuite,” says Judy Lohmueller, Vice President of Lohmueller and Associates, the NetSuite Solution Provider that has worked with NC State College of Management on the project. “Programs like this one at NC State get them prepared — and hired.”

For Marianne Bradford, the NC State College of Management accounting professor who launched the NetSuite project, it's been a win-win situation. With NetSuite's ease of use, she can focus on teaching and research — instead of technical troubleshooting — while her students get critical insight on the step-by-step details of critical business processes.

“We understand we may have been the first university to use NetSuite extensively in the classroom, and we're proud of that fact,” said Bradford. “We want to significantly grow our relationship with NetSuite in the future, and it's a relationship that other business schools should consider, as well.”

### The Challenges:

The best business schools recognize that academic theory isn't quite enough: Lessons sink in better when they're accompanied by hands-on experience. North Carolina State University's College of Management is one of the few schools in the country to teach a class on ERP — and it's a class where familiarity with software isn't a bonus, but a necessity. “It's not a good idea to teach this type of class without using a real-world package,” says Bradford. “You can talk about ERP and CRM, but you want students to see all the steps in the business process, not just those that affect the financials.”

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— *Marianne Bradford*  
Associate Professor, North Carolina State  
University College of Management

The NC State College of Management has been particularly proactive in embracing and teaching technology in its business classes. Since the 2005-2006 school year, students in the Master of Accounting program, which has grown 20% from the previous year, have been able to sign up for an IT concentration. As of this writing, 41% of students are enrolled in the IT concentration. So it's no surprise that the college has been a big booster of using actual business applications in the classroom. The challenge, however, is to find a package that can help students learn without bogging faculty and staff down in maintenance and support problems.

In the five years she has been teaching ERP—the last three at NC State—Bradford has used various software applications to set up projects for her MBA and Master of Accounting students. The first packages she tried had problems. “I had used much larger ERP packages, but they were rigid and not user friendly,” she says. “We’d have to run them on our own servers, and have someone managing them. Larger ERP packages are just too complicated for the classroom,” she states. “I would always have to hover over my students, helping them, and there would invariably be the middle-of-the-night e-mails from students who had pushed a button and lost all of their data. What we really needed was the Software-as-a-Service model—we just didn’t know it at the time.”

Looking for a better solution, Bradford searched the Internet and discovered NetSuite. She also discovered local NetSuite Solution Provider Lohmueller and Associates. In spring 2004, Rufus Lohmueller, president of Lohmueller, came to Bradford’s class and demonstrated the on-demand suite. Bradford liked what she saw: “The interface was much more user friendly, and the Web-based access was key,” she says. “We wouldn’t have to maintain the system, and students could work from home instead of a computer lab.”

The Lohmuellers agreed to come to the school each semester and demonstrate NetSuite for students. They also provide trial accounts, which the students use to complete in-depth ERP-related projects. And they provide support, all pro bono.

### **The Solution:**

Bradford and the Lohmuellers began their collaboration in the spring 2005 semester. Each class sits in on a NetSuite demonstration, and then breaks into groups of two or three to work on a project. Bradford rotates the projects every semester, but each has the same goal: to give students experience not only with enterprise software they may one day be using, but also with critical business processes. Here, says Bradford, is where NetSuite pays big dividends: “Since NetSuite integrates so many functions, from lead generation to invoicing, students can learn the entire end-to-end cycle of a business process—not just the financials.”

A project Bradford likes to assign is the quote-to-cash process—where students use NetSuite to play the role of a sales representative: inputting leads, creating opportunities, turning opportunities into quotes, and turning quotes into orders—as well as the warehouse managers who fulfill the orders and the controllers who accept customer payments and record them into the checking account. At each point in the process, students create related reports and documents as well as identify application controls inherent in the software. This last task is particularly educational. “Sarbanes-Oxley and other new regulatory schemes require that companies document and test controls, including IT-related controls,” says Bradford. “Using NetSuite, students get a real world taste for how that happens.”

Bradford’s program not only prepares students for the world outside the classroom, but by using NetSuite, she’s able to boost their knowledge efficiently and effectively. “There are no more technology issues to worry about so students can focus on applying theory to practice,” she says. “NetSuite has been headache free—which gives me time not only to teach, but to publish. For a professor, it doesn’t get better than that.”

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