

Benefitfocus® Success Story

Organization Overview

The University of Texas (UT) system is one of the largest public university systems in the U.S. The Office of Employee Benefits, an office under the Business Affairs arm of UT System, is responsible for the administration of benefits for 14 academic and medical institutions. From faculty members to health care professionals, researchers and support staff, a diverse group of more than 134,000 UT system employees and retirees are covered under the system.

Challenge

The University of Texas System (UTS) was having ongoing discussions to evolve its benefit program as the team desired to be a model for higher education benefits on the national level as well as deliver a better experience for its members. However, the aging, legacy mainframe enrollment system that it had relied on for 26 years hindered the ability to be more innovative in its approach and was being decommissioned.

After receiving a phone call that the mainframe would be removed within a three-year period, Laura Chambers, Executive Director, Office of Employee Benefits at UTS made the decision to move forward with the modernization project.

Solution

Following a rigorous RFP process, UTS ultimately chose to outsource, selecting Benefitfocus as its partner to modernize its eligibility and enrollment system with an approach to implement its 14 academic and medical institutions in three phases. The cloud-based, software-as-a-service model of the Benefitfocus Benefitplace platform enabled UTS to configure and scale its system to accommodate 16 separate instances – one for each institution along with system administration and the Office of Employee Benefits. The Office of Employee Benefits administers the retiree and COBRA billing and enrollment functions on behalf of the 14 institutions.

The intuitive user interface and the dedicated Benefitfocus customer success team allowed for easier knowledge transfer as 60 percent of the Employee Benefits staff became eligible for retirement within a year of implementation. Two staff members also had the opportunity to take on the more strategic role of data analysts as the Benefitplace solution automated a significant amount of the benefits-related tasks.



Members

134,000

Solution

Benefitplace™

Results

- Strategic resource realignment
- 84,732 benefit elections
- 80.7 % satisfaction rating

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Laura Chambers

Executive Director, Office of Employee Benefits,
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Another reason that drove UTS to select Benefitfocus was not only their experience with large government and education clients, but also its commitment to innovation.

“One of the things that was most impressive to us was the enormous commitment Benefitfocus has to research & development,” explained Chambers. “That was critical to us, because technology changes so quickly. And if our vendors aren’t staying on that leading edge of that, in no time at all your enrollment system will become outdated.”

In addition to streamlining administration and reducing the strain on its shrinking team, Benefitplace also delivered the modern member experience that has made UTS a true national model for higher education programs. The step-by-step enrollment workflow with integrated decision support and educational videos empower employees as well as retirees to make more informed benefit elections for themselves and their families.

A Phased Approach to Implementation

UTS made the decision to take a phased approach to implementing Benefitplace to better align with resource availability and competing projects across its institutions. This also enabled the UTS and Benefitfocus teams to apply lessons learned throughout for a more successful implementation and take into account certain nuances that varied across institutions. For example, academic institutions were on a nine-month payroll cycle, while the Health Science Centers were not. Additionally, there are nine different payroll platforms in use across the institutions so consideration for each platform was necessary.

Starting in May 2018, UTS and Benefitfocus partnered to configure and test the system to ensure each institution’s business rules were enforced and teams were trained appropriately. The teams had a tightly aligned testing schedule and more complete training materials for the timely launch of annual enrollment for all UTS employees and retirees in July 2020. More than 85,000 benefit elections were made during the annual enrollment and 80.7 percent of members gave the system a ranking of 7 or higher on a scale of 1 to 10.

“As with any implementation, challenges are inevitable. What defines the partnership is how groups work together to solve those challenges. We have that true partnership with Benefitfocus that spans across all of our institutions and has allowed us to develop relationships where our Benefits Representatives at the institutions can pick up the phone to get a problem solved.”

Laura Chambers

Executive Director, Office of Employee Benefits,
The University of Texas System

To learn more about how Benefitplace simplifies benefits administration for government and education organizations, visit our [website](#).