Modernizing Certification Testing for Wisconsin Firefighters

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The Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) plays a critical role in fire service education and certification across the state. Its 16 technical colleges serve 72 counties and support over 800 fire departments.

Each year, WTCS oversees the preparation and administration of written and practical exams for the state's fire service professionals. It delivers up to 5,000 certifications annually for 15 accredited International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) certifications.

By using the *Acadis® Readiness Suite*, WTCS has streamlined its management of nearly 50,000 active user records, facilitating a seamless process for curriculum development, exam validation, certification testing, and the issuance of certifications.

Simplifying Registration with Digital Tools

WTCS has transformed its class registration process with a web form within Acadis. Colleges submit program details directly through the platform, enabling staff to quickly review the request and activate classes. Then college personnel enroll existing students, while new student data is added by WTCS staff into Acadis.

This shift from manual to digital processes and training records brought immediate improvements for WTCS, as the former paper-based system was cumbersome and time intensive. "It had been manual for so many years," explained Shari Jacobson, fire service education specialist. "Now with Acadis, students have instant access to relevant information. They know immediately if they pass an exam and can access their certificate in Acadis. Students can also review information like key learning objectives for each exam."

By going digital with Acadis, WTCS has eliminated cost and delays associated with mailing physical materials back and forth to individual colleges, saving significant time in delivering and processing exams. Students now experience much shorter wait times for results and certifications.

WTCS continues to refine processes with Acadis' flexible and scalable system to better support college staff. "We continue to make improvements," added Denise Perkins, fire service education specialist. "We're working on getting additional workflows set up that will be even more helpful and save us more administrative time."

Digitizing Certification Testing

Prior to implementing Acadis, WTCS relied on manual, paper-based testing processes that required exams to be physically delivered, administered, and returned. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in its outdated system, motivating WTCS to adopt a new, more modern approach. Acadis provided both a robust testing solution and a centralized training database that it could rely on to simplify and expedite certification processes.

"We had two different systems before, and now everything is all in one place," Denise shared. "Students can go right into their portal account to view and print their certificates after an exam. Before, we were getting the exams back, scoring them, and sending in the scores. Now students are getting that information immediately and are able to see their missed learning objectives to know where to focus their studies. It's really changed our lives as far as our process evolving."

A Win-Win Solution for Students and Staff

WTCS' adoption of Acadis demonstrates the power of integrating modern technology to optimize certification processes. By centralizing operations and embracing digital tools, WTCS has created streamlined and efficient processes that benefit both students and staff.

While any major shift to a new system creates a learning curve, Wisconsin firefighters quickly adapted to Acadis once they understood the system and experienced its benefits. "We have nothing but buy-in," said Ward Lyon, director of fire service education and training. "It's been great!"