



## Vancouver Island University

VIU seeks to modernize administrative systems and improve student experience with system transformation.

In a unique, collaborative system evaluation process with Selkirk College, Vancouver Island University (VIU) selects Unit4 for full-suite ERP and SIS replacement hosted in the cloud...

### The situation

When it comes to managing university finances, payroll, human resources, and student records and registration, every university has a unique set of requirements. Vancouver Island University, a degree-granting institution in British Columbia with about 16,000 full- and part-time students, currently relies on legacy systems to meet its needs in these areas. However, as the university continues to advance its offerings to meet the needs of a modern student base, this legacy platform, which has been in use at VIU for decades, was unable to support the institution's current or future business model and was leading to inefficiencies.



## The needs

In order to meet its growing needs, VIU was looking for a new solution that would enable staff to work as an integrated team across departments, to benefit the student experience; extend access to programs and services; enable more proactive communication strategies; improve enrollment efficiency and enable effective measuring and reporting; as well as ensure the sustainability of the institution through effective use of finances and resources.

“When we needed to share information such as HR, payroll, or student finance information across departments, there was a time lag that was beginning to affect our daily operations,” said Elfie Smith, Chief Transformation and Project Director at VIU. “In the worst cases, we’d need to wait overnight before information was shared successfully between our multiple systems. We knew it was only a matter of time before we were unable to sustain our current system, and that there are a multitude of options out there that could help solve the issues we were having.”

The legacy system was limiting VIU’s ability to innovate and make data-driven decisions, as well as the ability to advance its academic plan. With an aim to modernize its technology and promote a culture of collaboration, VIU began a 16-month review and due diligence process of the available finance, HR and student systems.

### A collaborative selection approach

In order to cut costs and take advantage of knowledge sharing, VIU recognized a unique opportunity to enter into a partnership for its selection process with another BC institution: [Selkirk College](#). Selkirk College was facing similar technological challenges with their student management, HR and finance systems (running on the

same legacy system as VIU); and readily agreed to collaborate on the selection process.

As publicly supported institutions, VIU and Selkirk recognized that collaboration on the selection process would save time and money for both institutions. VIU and Selkirk have similar needs when it comes to finance, HR, and student systems, including the ability to enable more efficient collaboration across departments. Additionally, both institutions are under intense competition for students and have large and successful international student programs; mobile accessibility and ease of use for students were key factors when deciding on their new solution.

## The solutions

### A unique partnership with a rigorous review process

Thousands of individual business requirements were identified and ranked by priority, as part of a very detailed systems evaluation process. Subsequently, each ERP vendor VIU reviewed in the selection process was evaluated against its ability to meet these needs.

“As we continued to work with Selkirk on the selection process, we also recognized one additional benefit – the knowledge sharing that resulted from learning about their requirements and processes,” describes Smith. “We attended meetings and system demonstrations together, and with more brainpower and a differing perspective in the room, we were always sure we were asking the tough questions and getting in-depth answers.”

After a shortlist was selected, VIU and Selkirk invited them to provide demonstrations of their product and also spoke with existing customers to see what the solutions looked like in action – and be assured that what was promised was possible to attain in actuality.





After a rigorous joint assessment and evaluation process, VIU and Selkirk selected Unit4's cloud-based finance, HR and student systems. Important criteria for VIU were the high degree of configurability to fit the university's unique needs; its student-centric design and built-in mobile capabilities; its ability to instantaneously share information across departments; as well as the solution's extensive communications and workflow capabilities.

### A Thorough Selection Process

Overall, VIU attributes the effective selection process not only to its collaboration with Selkirk College, but also to the project buy-in of leaders at the institution.

"At every step of the selection process, we kept our institutional leaders abreast of where the project stood, and what capabilities were possible with the systems we were exploring. As we took a deeper dive into Unit4 and discovered what was possible with the platform, confidence and excitement in the project grew. This went a long way towards ensuring an effective outcome."

As VIU continues with the implementation process, collaboration with Selkirk College continues.

“ We started this process in partnership with Selkirk College but Unit4 has also become a close partner as the process progresses. Their team listens to our needs and is able to understand our requirements. We're looking forward to continuing to work with Unit4 and have complete confidence in their dedication to helping us succeed. ”

Elfie Smith, Chief Transformation and Project Director at VIU

### The benefits

Thanks to their joint approach in the bid process, both institutions realized savings of approximately 5,700 hours of implementation costs and a total of \$1.1 million, split between the two post-secondary institutions – with VIU saving approximately \$440,000 and Selkirk College about \$660,000.

### About Vancouver Island University

Known as a center of excellence for teaching, applied research and learning, Vancouver Island University (VIU), is a public post-secondary institution with roots that date back to 1936, when Nanaimo's first vocational training school opened its doors. VIU is a dynamic, internationally known University, supporting a student population of approximately 15,000 full-time and part-time learners, including over 2,000 international students, 1,500 aboriginal students, and employing over 2,000 faculty and staff. VIU is an organization that values a diverse range of training and education. The University provides an enriched and intellectually stimulating environment for students and employees. Offering programs from basic literacy to vocational programs, trades, undergraduate and graduate degrees, VIU encourages all students to explore their potential, discover more about their world, and excel in both life and learning.

For additional information please visit the VIU website: <http://www.viu.ca>

### About Unit4

Unit4 provides [student management](#), ERP and [research management](#) solutions to over 1000 colleges and universities globally to help them accelerate growth, boost student success, improve institutional effectiveness and deliver research excellence. Clients include Oxford and Cambridge Universities, HEC Paris, University of Waterloo, American University of Paris, Robert Morris University, Baylor College of Medicine, Hult International, and University of Dubai.

Unit4 provides [enterprise applications](#) that empower people in service organizations around the world. Our ERP, industry-focused and best-in-class solutions support thousands of organizations from sectors including professional services, education, public services, non-profit, real estate, wholesale, and financial services to build a better future. Unit4 is in business for people.

[unit4.com/us](https://unit4.com/us)

**T** 1-877-704-5974

**B** [unit4.com/us/blog](https://unit4.com/us/blog)

**E** [info-na@unit4.com](mailto:info-na@unit4.com)

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