Aliat Universidades

u-planner

Aliat Universidades **undergoes digital transformation**, setting an example for a **high performance institution**

INTRODUCTION

Aliat Universidades is a broad network of universities in Mexico. Its seven educational institutions amount to over 50 years experience in preparing quality professionals. The Aliat network consists of 30 university campuses with a total of more than 50 thousand students. Said students are immersed in a tech-managed learning model focusing on competencies. The goal is to provide top-quality service that includes optimal management of all the institutions' resources, guarantee access to enrolled students at different campuses, and comply with all the organization's performance indicators, all of the previous to provide educational excellence.

Optimization

The Aliat Optimization division, created at the end of 2015, is led by Mr. Marlon Tobon Marquez and reports directly to the Rectorate. There are also three highly qualified professionals that act

as central process programmers: Hugo Rubio, Claudia Gabriela Alvarez and Arturo Zamudio, who all coordinate and complement with the 30 campuses in the network. The team has vast academic experience and are sensitive to students' needs explains Tobon Marquez. "We carefully analyze and detect better alternatives for class loads, subject choices, classroom assignments and scheduling to make teacher and student commutes more efficient" he added.

The team specializes in learning about the region, its campuses and their vision of operations and in creating a program that is more closely aligned with the needs of each faculty and local culture. As central programmers they must have clear and direct communicational skills when conversing with academic directors, facilitating better management in teacher assignments and resource allocation to the benefit of the students.

SITUATION

Need to centralize and automate internal processes

The constant expansion of Aliat Universities constitutes a permanent challenge for efficient resource planning at an institutional level. Moving forward to 2016 the expansion had generated a set of complexities to program space and time that had ultimately led to inefficiencies in assigning student groups, teachers, scheduling and classrooms. Regaining control and effectively managing the relevant variables in these decisions was of particular importance to the entity in question.

At that time, planning and manual handling of resources was held locally on each campus. Although this is common practice in educational institutions, as the University expanded, these processes became more complex, and required still more time and staff to resolve them. In Aliat for example, only the revision of documents, tables and other variables used to assign a class load and schedule – before even getting to academic programming – consumed up to 40 hours per person for every four-month school cycle. To put an end to that practice, Aliat looked to centralizing the process into one unit.

SOLUTION

Adapted to Aliat's requirements

Aliat hired **u-planner** to help them through the challenge of centralizing schedules and resources through a digital platform. The team went through the following stages to find a solution:

1 **Diagnosis.** The team determined the main management and data storage needs for the institutions in the Aliat network.

2 **Adaptation.** With this appraisal, the team was able to adapt the functionalities of **u-planning** to the specific requirements.

3 **Consulting.** The **u-planner** team provided consulting services to manage the change and facilitate the implementation of the solution.

In this manner, Aliat managed to optimize the institutions' offer of schedules and resources. In particular the **u-planner** algorithms unified the process of assigning student groups, automating manual processes and establishing better procedures.

The Aliat planning process now integrates the following stages:

1 **Demand estimation for each faculty.** Registrations are obtained in accordance with each study program and progress of the students' academic development as they advance through the syllabus. The information is assessed and corroborated with academic leaders on each campus and study program.

2 **Ideal schedule generated by u-planning.** Said schedule is shared at local level allowing academic directors to propose improvements or make necessary changes.

3 **Optimum classroom assignment.** Considers the existing capacity at local level, the specific requirements for each subject and the size of the demand for each subject.

4 **Assignment of the best teachers on campus.** Each campus is responsible for assigning teachers, the only requirement is that said teacher has the highest performance according to teacher evaluations.

5 **Evaluation of performance indicators.**
a) Academic Quality: Net Promoter Score that measures student satisfaction, improve on academic approval rates and retention indicators.

b) Operational Efficiency: Increase group size, occupancy rate of the facilities, improvements to profitability.

*"If you are faced with a difficult challenge, and you need technological support to overcome it, **u-planner** offers the appropriate solution for talent, technology and client centeredness. They helped us have the same control we have in Mexico City in the remaining 29 campuses distributed throughout the country. In addition to that, the platform interface and database is user-friendly to install and operate.*

The table of indicators also displays the progress made in assigning teachers and students", explains Rafael Campos, Corporate Chief Academic Officer of Aliat Universidades.

Change management for successful implementation of u-planning

During the installation process for **u-planning**, Aliat faced much resistance to change, a common phenomena in any organization that decides to automate manual processes and optimize established procedures.

Although the transition and conditioning process is specific to each entity, Aliat Universidades had to overcome the following internal obstacles to implement the **u-planner** solution:

1 **Compatibility.** Align the change with the institutional vision of student development through learning and self-discovery in axiological subjects present in every degree.

2 **Quality.** Demonstrate that quality education provided by Aliat remains unchanged if the class size increases due to interactivity of people with different perspectives.

3 **Centralization.** Promote a centralized logistics for the class schedule generation by a group of experts compared to the former local planning.

4 **Relevance.** Drive an innovative solution that adequately integrates into the university's most significant systems.

5 **Flexibility.** Create a technological solution in conjunction with **u-planner** that allows for optimum integration of the educational offer in both rigid and flexible study plans (both modular and quadrimestral periods, in person and online).

In that sense, the communication plan between the Optimization division and the campuses was key to integrating the changes in the schedule generation process. **u-planner** contributed to knowledge garnered on how to manage resistance to change at an academic, student and institutional level with manuals and consultation.

WHY ALIAT CHOSE u-planner

The Aliat Unversidades leadership understood clearly that the solutions they needed for their operational and academic performance would have to be tech-based. However, given their reputation and constant expansion the solution had to be world-class and flexible to further changes.

This is the reason why Aliat chose u-planner as a supplier to overcome the challenge, considering the following three aspects:

1. Development of a state-of-the-art technology and competitive world-wide.

2. A work team with know-how in higher education management.

3. Commitment to providing quality solutions prioritizing a close and collaborative relationship with each institution.

BENEFITS

Aliat's value proposition

Aliat Universidades received an integral service with much added value when implementing **u-planning**, as well as consulting services specialized in process automation and standardization, and optimizing institutional data storage.

Thus, they obtained the following benefits:

1 **State-of-the-art technology.** Development of competitive world-class technological solutions.

2 **Flexibility.** Adaptation of knowledge and practices to fit the clients' needs.

3 **Scalability.** Tool solves varying problems and complexities.

4 **Communication.** Constant and fluid contact with the **u-planner** team.

5 **Consulting.** Support in decision-making with high organizational impact.

6 **Focus on growth.** Both tool and team actively work to help the institution bolster indicators and growth.

The institution gained particular advantage from the following three results:

(1) Fostered and increased interaction between students and different study programs.

(2) Improved on teacher performance given the platform makes it possible to prioritize class assignment to the best-evaluated educators to inspire the students.

(3) Optimized academic operations to simplify the tasks of academic leaders and mentors to focus their attention on students rather than class logistics.

Indicator improvement

After swift and agile initiatives to change processes and incorporate **u-planning,** Aliat observed an increase in the size of student groups increasing from 13 to 19.1 individuals in a year, equivalent to a 47% increase. The increase meant saving thousands of sections for each year.

47% increase in 2016 (13 to 19.1)

77% increase from 2016 to 2018 (13 to 23)
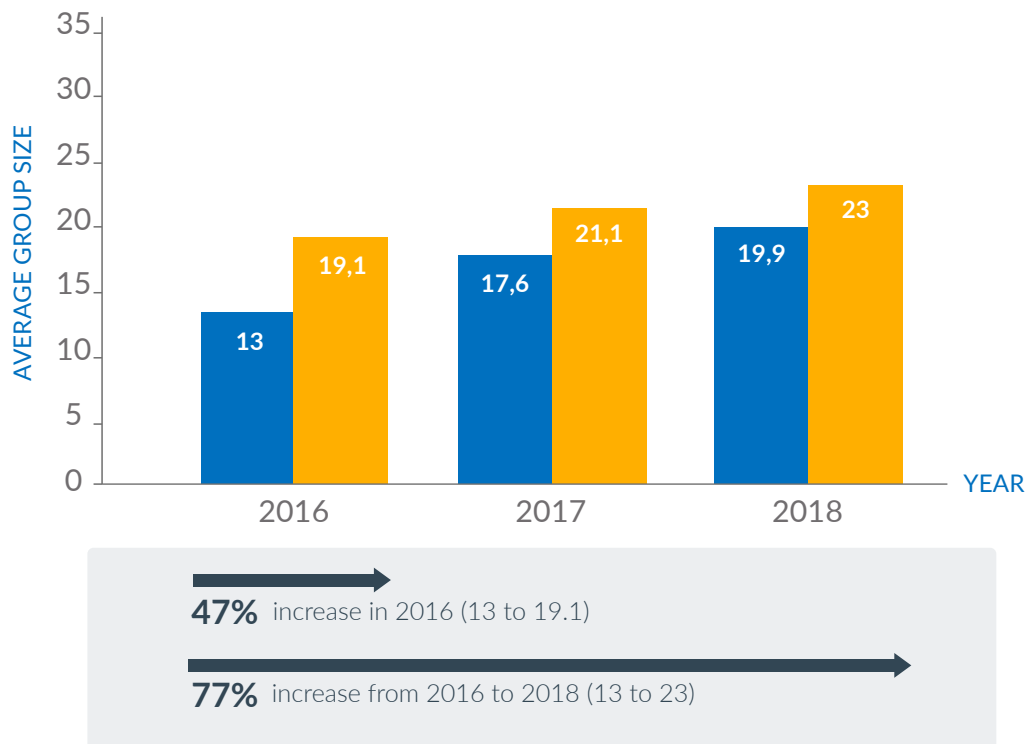
The percentage of annual optimization since the installation of **u-planning** in 2016-2018 for group size was 77%, as indicated in the graph.

Other operational benefits

a) Integration of inter-disciplinary classes that favor social learning.
b) Consolidation of group classes with students from same degrees.
c) Optimization of physical spaces.
d) Savings due to investment postponements for unnecessary infrastructure.

u-planner LEARNING EXPERIENCE

The service provided to Aliat Universidades was also considered a valuable learning experience for **u-planner**. Especially considering the company effectively confirmed the importance of having a team dedicated exclusively to processes of change and fluid communications between all parties. In practice, the Aliat team must be formally assigned and possess both the talent and leadership required to manage the transformation and focus on results. This also requires Aliat to be aligned with the **u-planner** team; and both teams need to work towards the completion of the institution's strategic plan.

That process must always rely on technology that can be parameterized, scaled and able to adapt to the needs of each entity. Such is the case with **u-planning.** "To make these efforts even more effective, everyone involved in the process must be trained and collaborate with **u-planner** communicating the changes they make", explains Juan Pablo Mena, CEO of **u-planner**.

"In these last three years **u-planner** has also gone through a transformation. We went from being a company that implements technology, to a company that focuses on empowering its clients and converting them into high performance institutions. Every year **u-planner** launches a new version of **u-planning** that incorporates everything we have learnt", adds Mena.

CONCLUSION

The **u-planning** solution helped Aliat Universidades to optimize resource programming, increasing group size by 77% over a three-year period, and 47% in a single year. The assignment of groups, teachers, schedules and classrooms is now an efficient and effective process.

Ultimately, the client can now concentrate its efforts on providing quality education and forming the very best professionals.

"Aliat Universidades's journey was a huge leap toward digital transformation, and marries the three pillars perfectly: talent, processes and technology. For us it was an example of high performance; they optimized efficiency in resource management to invest in improving the quality of education at their institution."

Juan Pablo Mena, CEO **u-planner**

*"We recommend **u-planner**, not only the tool we use, but also the entire suite of solutions they offer. The team will guide you during the entire process of continual improvement of your organization."*

Rafael Campos, Corporate Chief Academic Officer Aliat Universidades