

From Paper Risk to Operational Assurance

How George Mason University Embedded Compliance and Financial Integrity into Financial Aid... at Scale



HIGHERDIGITAL®

At-a-Glance

Client: Leading U.S. Public R1 Institution

Focus: Financial Aid Operations · Compliance · Finance Integration

Solution: Ellucian Workflow Design and Banner-Integrated Financial Aid Automation

Higher Digital Services: Workflow Design · Banner Integration · Financial Controls · Change Enablement

Key Metrics



0

Duplicate Academic-Year Data Entry



100%

Digital Award Processing



1

Integrated Financial & Compliance Workflow

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Higher Digital **helped us rethink financial aid workflows** as a connected system, not a series of handoffs.

Erica McQuiston

Executive Director of Enterprise Applications
George Mason University

CHALLENGES



Manual Award Processing. Paper-based forms and physical routing slowed approvals, increased staff effort, and introduced avoidable operational friction.

Financial Aid–Finance Disconnect. Awards were processed outside Banner using workarounds, creating accounting inaccuracies and additional reconciliation work.

Compliance at Risk. International tax review, grant approvals, and eligibility checks occurred after initiation, exposing the institution to compliance and audit risk.

SOLUTION



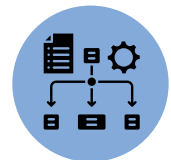
Higher Digital designed and implemented a purpose-built Financial Aid Award Workflow using Ellucian Workflow, tightly integrated with Banner Financial Aid and Banner Finance.



Intelligent Routing



Integrated Finance



Workflow Automation

OUTCOMES



1

Faster Processing

Awards move from initiation to completion in a fraction of the time, without manual handoffs or rework.

2

Stronger Compliance

Eligibility, tax review, and grant approvals are enforced automatically before funds are released.

3

Financial Clarity

Every award is accurately classified, charged, and visible across financial aid and finance systems.

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RELEVANCE



- **Use Ellucian** and struggle with manual financial aid processes
- **Rely on Accounts Payable** workarounds for scholarships or fellowships
- **Face growing compliance pressure** with flat or shrinking staff capacity
- **Need finance, compliance, and student systems** to operate as one

IMPACT



(Plain Language)

This transformation shifted GMU from manual enforcement to operational assurance.

Where staff once relied on paper trails, after-the-fact reconciliation, and manual checks, the new workflow enforces rules, validates data, and updates financial systems at the moment work happens.

The Result: Awards now move from initiation to completion in hours rather than days.

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CLIENT PERSPECTIVE - FULL QUOTE



“Higher Digital **helped us rethink financial aid workflows** as a connected system, not a series of handoffs. By embedding our policies, compliance requirements, and accounting rules directly into *Ellucian Workflow*, they **eliminated risk** while making life easier for our teams.”

Erica McQuiston

Executive Director of Enterprise Applications

George Mason University



About Higher Digital

Higher Digital **helps colleges and universities operate better** inside the systems they already have. We **specialize in embedding governance, financial discipline, and execution capability** directly into day-to-day operations... so progress doesn't rely on heroics or workarounds.

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