

## HIGHLIGHTS

### CHALLENGES



- ▶ The banking system did not have a complete set of payment products available for students and parents. Although the College could find these options, they could only obtain them through implementing multiple banks or financial service entities causing extra costs and complexities. Lethbridge College wanted a single platform that provided multiple solutions in one product that could be directly integrated into its student and financial information systems.
- ▶ COVID-19 created a series of issues and needs for students and staff who were not able to visit or work on Lethbridge College campuses. Thus, the crisis required the College to move quickly in identifying potential business partners and completing its due diligence of available solutions for international payments and domestic tuition payments in Canada.
- ▶ Changing its business processes to pivot in reaction to the pandemic and accommodate both student and institutional needs required detailed communications and training for its constituents to learn about these new digital payment alternatives along with managing the associated process changes.

### SOLUTIONS



- ▶ The College was able to quickly pivot into an all-in-one online payment environment adding international refunds and domestic tuition payment solutions to its student payment offering to meet local restrictions limiting students from traveling to its campuses. With additional targeted communications, Lethbridge College will educate continuing and new students about these new payment features.

## PARTNERING WITH LETHBRIDGE COLLEGE TO DIGITALIZE EDUCATION PAYMENTS AND REFUNDS

### IN NEED OF A CONSOLIDATED PAYMENT PLATFORM DUE TO COVID-19

The COVID-19 virus exposed a gap for many colleges and universities across Canada. Many students who preferred paying their tuition bills in-person needed a different option when their campuses were closed in the wake of the pandemic. Even before institutional staff started working remotely, Lethbridge College leadership were seeking solutions to enhance their student payment offerings and provide efficiencies that would simplify all aspects of their student payment and refund process.

With rising concerns about maintaining student enrollments and preserving tuition revenue streams in an uncertain environment, the College decided to expedite its efforts to find an innovative partner to implement an all-in-one solution for their tuition payment needs. Lethbridge College wanted a solution that would enable additional options for international refunds and domestic tuition payments while supporting several different payment methods so that students had choice and were not required to visit campus offices to pay their tuition and fees.



## HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ Lethbridge College added new online student payment methods that maximized ease of use. These products incorporate not only existing payment methods, but also can enable growing payment trends for payment choice and flexibility, such as Interac bulk requests for funds, pre-authorized debits, electronic fund transfers (EFTs), wires, and through a variety of digital e-wallets.
- ▶ Streamlining existing payment and reconciliation processes would permit the College to better utilize staff resources while reducing costs at a time when there is increasing budgetary pressure on higher education institutions.

## OUTCOMES



- ▶ Lethbridge College was able to quickly pivot to offer more online payment options in lieu of students using the **Payment Wheel** suite of solutions allowing the College to offer numerous other services, including both domestic and international tuition payments and international refunds, with plans to implement domestic refunds in the near future.
- ▶ The College was able to significantly reduce the amount of in person payments required for fall semester enrollment with the enhancement of their online digital payment method offerings, providing students with choice and payment flexibility.
- ▶ Reductions in manual processing, removal of cheques for international tuition refunds and more timely payments led to fewer errors and delays while streamlining “back-office” processes, such as account reconciliation, creating additional staff availability for other duties and direct customer service support.

The College’s goal was to work with a platform provider to help make tuition payments simpler for students and parents. They were looking to create efficiencies that would result in more accurate and timely posting of payments that would remove the need for manual entries within their student information systems that put a toll on staff resources. On top of this, the College wanted to find a way to eliminate the requirement of using paper-based cheques for tuition refund requests and replace it with a digital alternative.

## TECHNOLOGY ISSUES TO CONSIDER

After Lethbridge College learned that their current online systems could not provide the suite of sought-after payment solutions it was looking for, the College decided to seek out a partner who possessed an integrated all-in-one alternative that could interface with its Colleague student information system and offer them efficiencies for international refunds and domestic student payments in Canada. Using Colleague’s release 18 with the most current available user interface, the Procurement manager began a search of prospective vendors who could offer an integrated set of payment solutions and methods that also provided Lethbridge College with a customer-friendly and compliant environment.

While completing its due diligence in searching for alternatives, Lethbridge College found they had an existing partner that was able to meet its multiple objectives. The College had been working with **PayMyTuition** as its vendor for its international student payment solution for the last six months and had already experienced several efficiencies including increased cost savings and reallocation of staff resources that were no longer required for international payments processing. With **PayMyTuition’s** impact on the efficient handling of their international students’ payments process, Lethbridge College opted to partner with **PayMyTuition**, and their **Payment Wheel** solution, which had also proven its competencies in using applied payment interface (API) technology with direct integration into multiple student information systems, including Colleague, to utilize its vast set of additional solutions that Lethbridge College was looking for. With the first implementation process with **PayMyTuition** only taking five days to complete, having an innovative solution set with a short implementation window also proved to be an attractive option.



**DUE TO THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK, WE WERE LOOKING AT HOW WE COULD DELIVER SERVICES TO MAKE THE STUDENT PAYMENT AND REFUND PROCESS A BETTER EXPERIENCE FOR ALL INVOLVED. ONLINE PAYMENTS WERE THE BEST OPTION. NOW, STUDENTS TELL US HOW APPRECIATIVE THEY ARE THAT PAYING IS REALLY 'SO EASY'."**

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Relying on **PayMyTuition's** integration partner to connect the systems, only the College's finance group was needed to coordinate the implementation with **PayMyTuition**. There was no need to utilize college information technology (IT) resources, particularly beneficial at a time when IT staff were being pulled in multiple directions reacting to COVID-19 pandemic issue.

## HOW DID THESE NEW OPTIONS HELP BOTH STUDENTS AND INSTITUTIONS?

Lethbridge College students not only did not have to pay their tuition in person, but now they have additional payment options to provide them with both payment and timing flexibility. This new platform supports bill payments, along with options for Interac bulk requests for funds, pre-authorized debits, electronic fund transfers (EFTs), wires, and other payments through a variety of digital e-wallets. At the same time, Lethbridge College can utilize **Payment Wheel's** features that allow the institution to issue refunds faster and safer for its entire student population while facilitating new options for domestic and international payment plans that permit students to better plan how and when their bills get paid.

Having an integrated payment solution not only leads to quicker receipt of funds, but also creates an environment where there is little to no manual payment handling or processing, resulting in fewer delays or data entry errors for the school. Utilization of automation, coupled with AI and machine learning technologies, also creates an automated workflow enabling schools to streamline and simplify their daily reconciliation process.

Since Lethbridge College was able to enhance its digital payment method offerings, the need for in person tuition and fee payments was significantly reduced with only a handful of students visiting the finance office to make payments for fall semester.

## LETHBRIDGE COLLEGE

Lethbridge College opened in 1957 as the first publicly funded community college in Canada. Current enrollment is approximately 6,500 students, with more than 4,600 FTEs. The College's main campus is located in Lethbridge, Alberta, with other regional campuses located throughout the province. Lethbridge College offers programs in 50 career fields, which lead to one-year certificates, two-year diplomas and bachelor's degrees. More information about the College is available at [www.lethbridgecollege.ca](http://www.lethbridgecollege.ca).