Institutes of higher education face a number of distinct challenges when onboarding new employees. After all, a single college or university can hire thousands of new employees each year, across multiple departments, campuses, and even countries. When considering the different types of positions, including professors, administrative professionals, and maintenance personnel, as well as full-time, part-time, seasonal, contingent, and student workers, the difficulties of managing the onboarding process are further compounded.

Given the great diversity of hiring needs and the many different hiring managers involved, without a consistent approach to hiring and onboarding, the institution is likely to see several negative effects. For instance, the institution may be at risk of non-compliance if its employees do not fill out the appropriate new-hire paperwork, such as W-4 or Form I-9, employment contracts, confidentiality agreements, acknowledgment of company handbook or policies, and state-required notifications.

The process of filling out those forms can be particularly time-consuming and take up a large part of the new employee’s first day. This time could be better spent helping the employee become acclimated to his or her new role. Moreover, when such information is entered manually by hiring managers across different offices and location, the likelihood of errors being introduced becomes much greater, which can further slow down onboarding as those forms would have to be resubmitted. In addition, tightening budgets and shrinking HR teams have caused many institutions to be understaffed, making their large-scale hiring efforts even more challenging.
Higher education institutions must be prepared for the increase in government audits from agencies such as ICE and the DOL. Not only does this drive greater pressure to meet all regulations, but when forms are filed by hand and kept at disparate locations, it can be difficult to find and procure those documents. Factors such as increased regulations around I-9 and a growing number of state-specific notices, require that employers respond in a timely and adequate matter or face significant penalties. Therefore, it is more important than ever that institutions are able to access such documents quickly to ensure compliance when faced with audits.

Given these numerous – and growing – challenges in the onboarding process, it is time for colleges and universities across the country to adopt the technologies and processes that can bring significant improvement. Many institutes of higher education have already experienced the benefits of implementing an automated onboarding solution, such as Equifax Compliance Center, that can solve their biggest challenges, cut the bloat, and introduce numerous administrative efficiencies and process improvements.

An Updated Approach to Onboarding

With a robust and comprehensive automated onboarding solution in place, HR teams can ensure a centralized and consistent process for all of their hiring activities. Such a solution can save significant time in the onboarding process, enabling new hires to spend less time filling out forms and more time learning about their new environment, understanding their role, and organizational procedures and meeting their new colleagues.

An automated solution can also complement other HR and payroll systems, especially in the traditionally decentralized higher education environment. Rather than being subjected to manual errors, an automated solution can prevent

Employers face millions of dollars in potential risk and exposure with failure to comply
inconsistencies as new hires fill out the forms; with the use of ‘smartforms,’ which check for valid and complete data and can be automatically updated with previous answers on the form, it is nearly impossible for hiring managers to introduce errors. They can also ensure the security of their employees’ sensitive information, eliminating instances in which employees’ personal information is exposed, while speeding up the hiring process. Additionally, as an automated solution enables hiring paperwork to be completed remotely and prior to the first day, employee security access and computer set-up can be completed in advance, enabling employees to be productive on their first day.

Automated onboarding solutions also help the institution avoid challenges typically faced when hiring foreign nationals who don’t have or don’t know their social security number. For instance, automated solutions can remove those documents requiring a social security number from the packet and allow them to be completed once the individual acquires their social security number. As an automated solution can be used across all locations and for each type of employee—whether staff, faculty, adjuncts, students, fellows, contractors or temporary workers – the end result is enhanced transparency throughout the hiring process. Moreover, as regulations constantly change and vary from state to state, an automated solution can ensure each new hire fills out the proper forms, which is essential as many institutions hire faculty to teach online courses and on extension campuses.

How an Automated Solution Can Help Cut the Bloat

The University of Florida and Northern Arizona University are just two examples of institutions that have experienced positive results since adopting Equifax Workforce Solutions automated onboarding solution, Compliance Center. As each university hires thousands of employees each year, they were both

Protect Your Organization by Building a Culture of Compliance

- Monitor, adjust, and self audit
- Establish policies and procedures
- Documentation management and enforcement
- Certification and ongoing training
inundated with paperwork and the various forms involved with onboarding new hires.

For example, University of Florida, which has 650 hiring managers and 28,000 employees and hires between 8,000 and 10,000 new hires each year, previously used paper forms for each employee, resulting in longer onboarding periods and introduced risk. After implementing the solution, the University realized significant improvements and earned high-profile recognition, including CUPA HR’s HR Innovation Award for its onboarding process, as well as a 2013 Prudential-Davis Productivity Award, which recognizes state employees and work units in Florida who embrace innovation and creativity to increase productivity and delivery of state services.

“Our new hires love it! The implementation of Compliance Center enabled us to enhance the onboarding process from meeting with a manager and completing paper forms to an informative and fun multi-step online process. In addition, we’ve saved about 1.5 hours in processing time per hire leading to an estimated annual salary savings of $360,000.”

- Melissa Curry, Human Resources Director at University of Florida

Similarly, Northern Arizona University, which welcomes 3,500 new hires each year, processed across 100 different offices and at more than 30 remote campuses, was also able to enhance onboarding following implementation of the solution. Because of the tremendous efficiencies of the online process they were able to redirect resources to other more people centered roles rather than focusing on paperwork. In both cases, each university was able to improve its onboarding processes after adopting the automated solution, from streamlining the onboarding process, ensuring the safety of employees’ personal information, integrating the system with existing HR technologies, and ensuring that all employees across all locations and regardless of job type receive timely compensation.

Institutes of higher education continue to struggle to streamline the onboarding process and adopt the solutions that can lead to process improvement, reduced risk, and greater onboarding success. Yet, as Northern Arizona University and University of Florida each discovered, there are numerous methods to improve onboarding and create a streamlined process to get new hires into the institutions more quickly and effectively. The use of an automated onboarded solution has enabled improved and streamlined operations in a number of ways, including:

**Account for High-Volume Hiring**

Educational institutions can have hundreds of different hiring managers across many different departments and offices, and often hire across the country and across the globe. Therefore, it is crucial that all hiring managers utilize a consistent and compliant onboarding process. This is especially important for University of Florida. More than a quarter (25-30 percent) of its new employees reside out of state at the time of hire, which can lead to significant hurdles when having them fill out the
appropriate new hire paperwork. Since implementing an automated onboarding solution with seamless integration into its existing applicant tracking system (ATS) and payroll system, new hires benefit from a more efficient experience that makes it easy to complete the necessary paperwork before they start, regardless of where they are located.

Northern Arizona University faced a similar challenge in onboarding its out of state new hires to complete the paperwork and ensure the University had all relevant information from them. Moreover, the paper-based new hire packets had to be transported from the hiring department to HR, creating further delays and leaving personal information vulnerable. Since automating key processes including document management, the University has been able to ensure it receives the necessary information on time. The University is also able to redirect its internal resources to more value-added activities as the system reduces the processing time per packet from 60 to 30 minutes. In addition to the hard cost savings the University experienced, they were able to change the culture of hiring new employees.

**Achieve Cost and Process Efficiencies**

Educational institutions typically spend enormous amounts of time collecting and processing new hire paperwork. Yet, if these forms are not filled out in time, employees will not be in the payroll system and won’t be paid in a timely manner. Through automated document management however, the institution can reduce the costs associated with administration, postage, processing, and compliance, while ensuring paperwork isn’t misplaced or mishandled. Northern Arizona University and University of Florida alike have overcome these challenges by managing their new-hire paperwork packets with a streamlined electronic onboarding solution.

After collecting basic employee information, Northern Arizona University sends the new hire data to Equifax Workforce Solutions, which automatically initiates an email to the new

“In addition to the savings we have experienced through Compliance Center we have made a significant change to our culture of hiring new employees. The consistent onboarding solution has streamlined the process for managers and new hires alike. New employees have an excellent first impression and a new confidence in our HR processes from their first encounter.”

- Cathy Snow, Associate Director, Human Resources at Northern Arizona University
hire with the packet and instructions for filling it out electronically. Through this method, certain data is pre-populated into the forms, making it easier for the new hire to verify and complete while maintaining a high level of data security. The new hire simply presents his or her name to the appropriate department or to HR to complete Section 2 of the Form I-9 process, and the information is submitted to E-Verify® automatically. Once the Form I-9 is completed and E-Verify status is received, the employee data is loaded into payroll. Automated hiring documents are entered into the payroll system directly upon approval of the hiring transaction.

As for University of Florida, the institution sought to eliminate instances of late hires and to better manage the three-day deadline for E-verify using Compliance Center from Equifax Workforce Solutions. University of Florida accomplished this by integrating the onboarding solution with GatorStart, its university-branded onboarding experience. After information is submitted to Equifax, the new hire receives GatorStart access as well as instructions for filling out the new hire packet. Upon completion and final review, the new hire is entered into the payroll system.

The automated technology also populates new hire information into universities’ talent management systems, bringing greater efficiency and significant cost savings to the onboarding process. For instance, University of Florida reports that its new hire paperwork can be completed in less than 10 minutes. At Northern Arizona University, where new hires must complete 17 individual forms, the hiring packet can now be completed in less than 30 minutes, and 75 percent of new hires can complete the forms before they even begin work.

Better Manage New Hire Forms

Given the many different forms new hires are required to complete, and how they can vary from state to state, an automated onboarding solution can help to ensure the right forms are completed appropriately and account for any changes in legislation. For example, Northern Arizona University must comply with Arizona law requiring all employees in the state to sign a loyalty oath and to submit to background checks. With an automated onboarding solution, the system can recognize the state in which the new hire currently lives and adjust the packet automatically to include the relevant documents.

University of Florida realized that the solution could help it comply with new regulations and requirements. After implementing the solution and realizing numerous benefits and efficiencies, University of Florida also recognized the advantages of enhancing the use of the system to include additional documents. The University is currently planning to expand its use of the solution to process additional documents pertaining to the Affordable Care Act, disability, and Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) requirements.

Ensure Compliance when Employing Students

One of the most challenging areas for university onboarding remains the hiring of students. Oftentimes students have not been employed previously and may be unfamiliar with the onboarding process and the various forms they will need to complete. Additionally, sometimes the hiring process can be informal (such as a professor asking a student to do some work in the lab). Nonetheless, it is crucial that
universities hire students in compliance with all regulations and ensure that their student workers are paid appropriately.

Northern Arizona University has found great success in improving the student employee onboarding process. As all necessary paperwork can be filled out online, on a medium with which most students are comfortable, the University can ensure student employee paperwork can be completed in a timely manner. Rather than students doing work and wondering why they aren’t being paid, the solution can facilitate even the most casual of work arrangements. Therefore, the University can be confident that all students are paid on time and feel valued for their hard work.

**Standardize Foreign National Hiring**

It is very common for educational institutions to employ foreign nationals as adjunct professors, but doing so can cause some significant challenges when onboarding these individuals and during completion of the required paperwork. For instance, if the new hire doesn’t have a social security number, HR and hiring managers can have difficulty getting them fully onboarded.

Compliance Center is a unique onboarding solution in that it can address this situation with built-in enhancements to account for new hires who may not be U.S. citizens. The solution can remove documents requiring a social security number for cases in which the employee indicates that he or she has applied for one. As a result, the manager can then have those specific documents completed once the social security number is available.

**Develop a Fully Branded Onboarding Process**

While it is one thing to streamline the way new employees fill out their new hire paperwork, for an optimal experience, the institution should seek to truly immerse them in the organization on their first day.

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**Key Drivers for Onboarding**

Best-in-class onboarding involves streamlining your process of managing new hire forms compliance, in order to obtain:

- Consistent experience across managers and employees
- Improved brand image by properly representing your organization at the point of new hire
- Improved efficiency through automated processing and integrations, yielding a reduction in labor time associated with manual tasks
- Automated forms management reduces errors and risks and ensures requirements are met with proper form retention
University of Florida achieves this with its GatorStart platform, in which the institution presents new hires with engaging and informative videos designed to introduce them to the university. Videos include details on how to complete the onboarding paperwork and what they need to do to prepare for their first day. Northern Arizona is able to achieve this as well through its “Welcome to NAU” welcome packet, a fully branded onboarding experience to prepare new hires. As a result, new employees at both universities can begin their tenure with a firm understanding of the University and how they can contribute most effectively.

Streamlined Processes, Improved Onboarding Experience

Adopting an automated onboarding solution can bring numerous benefits to higher education institutes, as demonstrated by the success found by Northern Arizona University and University of Florida. Each university implemented new technologies and processes seamlessly with their existing infrastructures and talent management platforms, facilitating a more streamlined and efficient onboarding process for new hires, hiring managers, and HR teams alike.

Since implementing automated onboarding, University of Florida has seen the error rate of its new hire paperwork decrease from 68 percent to less than five percent. Moreover, the University has received positive feedback from hiring managers on the use of the solution. Although not required to use the solution, about 80 percent of the University’s hiring managers have adopted GatorStart and automated onboarding when welcoming new hires.

Northern Arizona University has also received exceptional feedback on the program, with 92 percent of surveyed employees reporting no difficulty after completing and submitting the new-hire packet. Three months following implementation, 94 percent of administrative users stated that the automated hiring packet also had a positive impact on the new employee experience.

The use of an automated onboarding solution can bring significant improvements to the hiring process of institutes of higher education. Utilizing a complete, branded onboarding solution tailored to meet their unique needs, each university benefits from a streamlined process for engaging new hires from the beginning and ensuring a smooth process for completing all of the required paperwork. What results is an efficient and compliant onboarding process that gets new hires into their roles sooner, while eliminating much of the bloat often involved in onboarding in the university environment.

Positive Impact of Automated Onboarding

University of Florida:
- 68% decrease in error rate of new hire paperwork
- 80% of hiring managers adopted automated onboarding

Northern Arizona University:
- 92% of surveyed employees report no difficulty in completing new hire packet
- 94% of administrative users report a positive impact on new employee experience
About Compliance Center

Compliance Center is a streamlined technology platform that provides a consistent onboarding experience for employers and employees to process corporate and government forms, help reduce risk, achieve savings through administrative efficiencies, improve the employee experience, and manage legislation through an automated process.

About Equifax, Inc.

Equifax is a global leader in consumer, commercial and workforce information solutions that provide businesses of all sizes and consumers with insight and information they can trust. Equifax organizes and assimilates data on more than 500 million consumers and 81 million businesses worldwide, and uses advanced analytics and technology to create and deliver customized insights that enrich both the performance of businesses and the lives of consumers. Equifax Workforce Solutions (also known as TALX), an Equifax business unit, is a leading provider of human resource, analytics and verifications services.

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