

# Two tech companies with Philly ties just joined forces to make it easier for college students to get financial aid

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Credit: Stanley Morales from Pexels

Two information technology companies based in Montgomery County—Unisys, the venerable Blue Bell tech services and consulting

provider, and Boomi, the fast-growing Conshohocken software-systems integrator—have teamed to speed up California's state college financial aid payment systems.

They hope it will be a lucrative model for deals ahead.

Under terms of the new deal, the 450,000 students at the California State University system will get instant access to student aid, California State University deputy vice chancellor Nathan Evans said in a statement. Currently, the process can take up to a month as applications go through multiple systems.

Unisys, once a [computer manufacturer](#) that rivaled IBM, now sells cloud server solutions and other computing infrastructure and services to longtime clients, including Cal State, which uses PeopleSoft and Oracle systems to link records at 23 campuses around the nation's most populous state.

Since 2019, Unisys "did all the work to modernize their infrastructure and take it into the cloud," said Unisys president and chief operating officer Mike Thomson. "Then Boomi came to us to to bring financial aid to the students in an expeditious manner. It had taken weeks and months to get paper through the system. Now it's almost real time."

Boomi's software integration enables the state financial aid agency (which gives grants to around 30% of Cal State students a year) to answer requests "in real time" and speed the distribution of aid money, according to Boomi executive Josh Rutberg.

The Boomi-Unisys arrangement replaces what California officials called a weeks-long "manual, labor-intensive, multistep," process of locating grant information, copying and transferring files, and processing data, with instant updates and replies.

Cal State chief information officer Ed Clark predicted the new arrangement would also have the effect of reducing dropouts because more students will make payments in advance of deadlines.

Nine of the campuses are already connected under the new arrangement, with the other 14 to follow this spring.

Next, Unisys' Thomson said his company wants to move Cal State texts and testing materials online in multiple language translations to reach more students. "Cal State will be our poster child" for a new push into higher-ed sales, he added.

## **Who are Boomi and Unisys?**

Boomi, which employs around 1,800 worldwide, including 200 at its new headquarters on Conshohocken's Fayette Street, claims more than 20,000 users.

The company, founded in 2000 and once based in rented space over a Conshohocken pizza shop, grew rapidly during the years it was owned by computer company Dell U.S.. Boomi was purchased by private-equity investors Francisco Partners and TPG in 2021 and has since added 500 staff in the U.S., India, Canada, and other nations. Sales are projected to total around \$500 million this year.

Unisys, which traces its roots to early manufacturers of typewriters, mainframe computers, and other business machines, employs around 18,000 people worldwide. That includes 500 employees in Blue Bell on a campus that formerly housed its computer manufacturing and maintenance operations but is now mostly occupied by other companies.

While Unisys' revenues have declined recently to around \$2 billion last year from \$3 billion 10 years ago, CEO Peter Altabef said in a recent

interview that Unisys has repositioned itself as a growth company in partnerships with large software providers and specialized software integrators such as Boomi.

Unisys remains "an engineering company at our roots," Thomson said. "The cultural mindset of this company is still in manufacturing. What we do is very solution-specific."

"We continue to reinvent ourselves," added Dwayne Allen, Unisys' chief technology officer.

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