



WEBER STATE
UNIVERSITY

Weber State Develops Comprehensive Oracle Data Warehouse in Nine Months Using WhereScape

Industry: Higher Education

Location: Ogden, Utah

Employees: 4000

Solution: WhereScape RED,
Oracle, Tableau

Highlights:

- With two developers, deployed an Oracle data warehouse in 9 months
- Delivered 10 fact tables with dimensions for one million student registration records
- Reporting and analytics users invigorated by the insight possibilities of the data warehouse

“Our reporting and analytics users are excited and are imagining the possibilities of what is now possible. More and more, IT is able to say ‘yes we can’ to business requests.”

— Lucas Jones, Database Administrator, Weber State University

Introduction

Founded in 1889, Weber State University is a coeducational, publicly supported university offering professional, liberal arts and technical certificates, as well as associate's, bachelor's and master's degrees. The university prides itself in its excellent teaching, extraordinary commitment to meeting the needs of students at every stage of life and ongoing service to the community.

WSU's Ogden, Utah campus is located on the western flank of the Rockies where more than 26,000 students study full- and part-time. WhereScape talked with Lucas Jones, database administrator, about how Weber State's new data warehouse greatly enhances data consistency, quality and access for the University's Tableau user community.

What is the history of data warehousing at Weber State?

Weber State's data warehouse is 15 years in the making, the result of several false starts. The University's IT department had a "build it ourselves" mentality which never delivered a fully functioning enterprise solution. The result was multiple disparate systems with inconsistent data housed in data silos that proliferated throughout campus. We had no concept of centralization—departments were maintaining their own numbers in their own spreadsheets. We wanted the ability to enhance data consistency and sharing of data across the University for reporting and analysis.

Renewed Administration support led to our ability to restart the project. After working very closely with new staff in the Institutional Reporting Office on designing and developing a solution, we were able to obtain internal buy-in and development funding.

Would you describe your due diligence process?

Even with our past failures in developing an enterprise data warehouse, we still considered building our own solutions once again. But it readily became apparent that we could not complete the project in a timely way with the resources we had. We also recognized that we would never get the project airborne because requirements and policies would change too quickly and there would be too many other demands on IT's time.

In seeking our solution, we investigated packaged cloud-based solutions. Our due diligence showed that a majority of the universities who had purchased these solutions had ended up doing heavy customization to where they might have been better off building their own. We also faced a harsh reality; universities who had successfully built their own data warehouse or heavily customized a packaged solution had personnel resources six or seven times or more what we were able to throw at this development effort.

We felt boxed in at this point, and were leaning towards purchasing a packaged solution and customizing it to the best of our abilities. Then we found WhereScape. One of the things that stood out about WhereScape® RED during our due diligence was that the software is intended to be used with a small staff, which was fitting for the realities of our staffing situation.

What are your results to date with WhereScape?

From the selection of WhereScape RED to the implementation of our Oracle data warehouse was nine months with two staff members. The enterprise data warehouse greatly enhances data consistency, data quality and data access for Weber State's hundreds of Tableau users and is enabling analysts to ask and answer questions that were not possible due to the University's previous data management infrastructure. The initial rollout of the data warehouse contains Weber State student information comprised of 10 fact tables and supporting dimensions detailing one million student registration records dating back to 2006. Using Tableau, we are now able to analyze student demographics in some very powerful and insightful ways.

How would you gauge your success to date?

The initial warehouse deployment satisfied approximately 80 percent of our existing user needs. While a great accomplishment, it is truly not indicative of our success because there is a greatly increased breadth of analysis users are able to conduct on the data warehouse. What we hoped for is happening. Our reporting and analytics users are excited and are imagining the possibilities of what is now possible. More and more IT is able to say "yes we can" to business requests. Our user community will grow significantly as word spreads of our success and the data warehouse—and the data contained in it—are taken for granted and our user community.

What is next on your development roadmap?

We've deployed our first financial aid fact tables and dimensions. After completing financial aid, we hope to tackle integrating human resources information next. WhereScape automation will help us provide more to our analysis users sooner than we would be able to using traditional, manual processes.



“With WhereScape, we have been able to do a lot more with a lot less resources. We completed phase one of the data warehouse much sooner than we ever thought possible—by a long shot.”



What did WhereScape bring to Weber State?

Prior to implementing WhereScape automation, we lacked expertise—and just as important—confidence. We felt expertise would come with time and use. WhereScape provided us with the expertise and confidence to get the job done.

WhereScape RED takes the guesswork out of things. Oracle developer expertise, data warehouse best practices and automation are built into the software. We often catch ourselves asking, “How long would it take me to do this by hand?”

With WhereScape, we have been able to do a lot more with a lot less resources. We completed phase one of the data warehouse much sooner than we ever thought possible—by a long shot. And that included the development effort going on during the University’s heaviest registration period. It is very difficult to put a hard number, or quantify how much benefit we are getting out of our data warehouse, but suffice it to say the project has been deemed an overwhelming success by management and users alike.

About WhereScape

WhereScape helps IT organizations of all sizes leverage automation to design, develop, deploy, and operate data infrastructure faster. More than 700 customers worldwide rely on WhereScape automation to eliminate hand-coding and other repetitive, time-intensive aspects of data infrastructure projects to deliver data warehouses, vaults, lakes and marts in days or weeks rather than in months or years. WhereScape has global operations in the USA, UK, Singapore and New Zealand. www.wherescape.com