

How Kansas City University Doubled in Size Without Adding Payroll Staff

The challenge

When Kathleen Gould joined Kansas City University 13 years ago as Vice President of Finance, the university was running on a patchwork of systems. Their payroll platform wasn't designed for higher education's scale, their HR system was outdated, and expense reports still relied on four-part carbon forms.

"I think we might be the only reason one of these companies is in business still," Kathleen recalls with a laugh.

The limitations were clear. With plans for growth and ambitious goals for the university's future, KCU needed a unified and integrated platform that could support their vision. After evaluating their options, they chose Workday — going live with HCM in December 2015 and financials in July 2016.

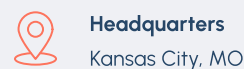
"It was a big investment, but we knew we needed to grow, and we were not going to be able to support the university's operations with the tools we had," Kathleen says.

The results speak volumes. Since implementation, KCU has expanded from 240 full-time employees to 430, increased student enrollment by 75%, and achieved notable revenue growth, all while maintaining lean payroll operations.

Overview



Kansas City University (KCU) is a private medical school with campuses in Kansas City and Joplin, Missouri. Since its founding in 1916, KCU has grown to become Missouri's largest medical school, serving students across multiple locations.



Building in payroll expertise from day one

As KCU prepared to implement Workday, the finance team saw an opportunity. They had faced struggles with payroll accuracy and service levels in the past, and the complexity of managing payroll taxes was daunting.

"Frankly, the tax part was one where I thought my eyes were going to glaze over," Kathleen admits. "I thought, really, do I want to be responsible for that?"

That's when Workday introduced them to OneSource Virtual. OSV's Workday-native approach immediately resonated with the team. No middleware or risky integrations, simply expert support working directly within their Workday tenant.



"The fact that they were Workday-only gave us a real sense of confidence that they were committed and would understand the system," Kathleen says. "And frankly, in that particular area, they're going to understand the system better than we do."

KCU went live with OSV's PayAdmin Premium services from the start, never processing payroll without OSV support in place.

The partnership advantage

For KCU, OSV's proactive partnership matters just as much as the technology itself. When Missouri's tax system occasionally resurfaces resolved issues from years past, OSV handles the communication and resolution behind the scenes.

"Now we just send it to OSV, and they talk to them and go, 'Yep, we got it all figured out,'" Kathleen says.

The ticketing system works efficiently, whether settling regular payroll or managing off-cycle payments. Communication is clear, timelines are transparent, and the team always knows what to expect.

"They don't try to clear the ticket if it's not resolved," Kathleen notes. "They'll work diligently to finish the issue."

For higher education's specific needs — including large numbers of student workers, adjunct faculty, and varied compensation structures — OSV offers essential guidance on handling complex scenarios.

"Ashley will reach out to OSV and say, 'Here's what we need to do, what's the best way for us to get this executed?' And they'll help us decide how we can get that done and get them paid quickly," Kathleen explains.

I want OSV who has the scale to really be an expert at the deep, detailed level, and then we can be experts in the other things we want to be experts in."

– Kathleen Gould, VP of Finance at Kansas City University



Scaling without adding headcount

Perhaps the most impressive outcome: KCU has nearly doubled their workforce without increasing payroll staff.

"We have one payroll administrator supervised by our controller," Kathleen says. "Our service levels and accuracy are higher than before, and our senior payroll analyst is able to take on other duties that help out the accounting function a lot."

This efficiency stems from OSV's expertise handling the detailed, technical work of payroll tax management, garnishments, and compliance, freeing up KCU's team to focus on strategic initiatives.

"I'd rather let them be the experts at the details and make sure I have good communication," Kathleen says. "I know when something needs to be looked at and I know if we've got a problem or not. But other than that, I want OSV who has the scale to really be an expert at the deep, detailed level, and then we can be experts in the other things we want to be experts in."

A partnership worth recommending

When asked what she'd tell other higher education institutions considering Workday and OSV, Kathleen doesn't hesitate.

"I would definitely recommend going [with] Workday and an automated, integrated payroll with that. And I would certainly recommend OSV support to enable your team to focus on other things."

The collaboration between HR and finance has improved too. With a new HR liaison who understands both sides of payroll operations, troubleshooting happens faster and communication flows more smoothly.

"Other than that, we get payroll done, and everybody gets paid and everybody's happy," Kathleen says with satisfaction.

From fragmented systems to streamlined operations, Kansas City University's investment in Workday and OSV has given their team something invaluable: time to focus on serving students and advancing their mission in medical education.