



FIRST UNIVERSITY IN THE NATION TO DEPLOY COGNIEDU

Minutes, *not days*

How Saint Leo University put its enrollment, finance, and student-success data on a single AI platform, and gave its leadership real answers in real time for the first time.

1st

University in the country on
CogniTdu

An early-mover advantage in a sector with
no margin for error

SAINT LEO UNIVERSITY
EST. 1889 · FLORIDA

INSTITUTION	PROFILE	LEADERSHIP	PLATFORM
Saint Leo University, Florida	~7,000 students, plus online	Dr. J. Burkee 12th president	CogniTdu AI for higher ed

01 The challenge

Dr. Jim Burkee calls this the hardest environment for American higher education since World War II. A demographic cliff, falling international enrollment, and hard questions about the value of a degree have collided, and for many institutions the margin for error has vanished. Yet the tool a president needs most, a clear and current view of the institution, was exactly what the old systems could not provide.

- **No single source of truth.** Registrar, financial aid, and finance data lived apart, reconciled by hand in spreadsheets, with turnaround measured in days.
- **Interventions came too late.** The first contact with a struggling student could be midterms, after weeks of missed signals.

The problem was never a shortage of data. Universities capture enormous amounts of it. The problem was that the data sat in separate systems that were never built to talk to each other, and reaching it meant slow, manual work that arrived too late to act on.

- **Blind at the worst moment.** Classes would begin and the president could not know actual enrollment until the census weeks later.
- **Surprises reached the board.** Numbers assembled at the last minute sometimes had to be corrected days later.

“We collect data all over the place, and then the data just sits there. For twenty-five years it was the same frustration: classes started and I didn't know until much later who showed up, who didn't, or where we were trending.”

DR. JIM BURKEE · PRESIDENT, SAINT LEO UNIVERSITY

02 Why Saint Leo went first

Saint Leo had lived the cost of bad information, coming through a difficult financial period rooted in incomplete data and surprises to its board. Following its normal governance process, and recognizing an opportunity to apply relevant expertise, the university engaged CogniEdu, a platform built by Custom Technology Solutions specifically for how a university operates, and Burkee agreed to become the first university in the country to deploy it.

“Nothing exists like this in the business. This will revolutionize management for presidents, and frankly, for boards of trustees too.”

DR. JIM BURKEE

03 The approach

CogniEdu connects the systems a university already runs into one live source of truth, then lets leaders ask questions in plain language and get answers in real time, built around the questions the institution actually needed answered.

i One connected data fabric

Enrollment, finance, financial aid, student information, and the LMS unified, replacing manual reconciliation across disconnected systems.

iii Trustee health dashboard

Gives trustees clear, high-level indicators of the university's financial and enrollment health, so oversight rests on current information rather than reports that are weeks old.

ii Early-alert visibility (in development)

The goal: surface students who need attention early, so support reaches them in week one rather than at midterms. Connecting the underlying systems is work in progress.

iv Federal reporting (on the roadmap)

Streamlining reporting for the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, the federal filing that has traditionally required significant staff time and often arrived late.

04 Results

Saint Leo is in its first year on the platform. The operational changes below are already in place; full-year outcome measures are being tracked and reported as the data matures.

- **First in the nation.** Saint Leo is the first university in the country to deploy CogniEdu, an early-mover advantage.
- **Real-time answers replace multi-day cycles.** Leadership queries enrollment and finance instantly instead of waiting on manual reports.
- **Early-alert visibility in progress.** The university is building toward surfacing at-risk students early, a level of visibility it has never had before.
- **Cost offset and stronger governance.** Per President Burkee, savings in data-gathering personnel and consultants more than compensate for the platform, while trustees govern from a shared, current view of the university's health.

MEASURING YEAR ONE

Outcome metrics Saint Leo is tracking this academic year:

Retention lift

BASELINE VS. YEAR ONE

Students re-engaged

AS EARLY-ALERT COMES ONLINE

Reporting cost saved

IR + CONSULTANT SPEND

Time to answer

DAYS → MINUTES

Why CogniEdu

Built specifically for higher education, not adapted to it, CogniEdu is one connected layer in Saint Leo's broader move to become an AI-first institution, with the security, disciplined access, accuracy, and student-record protections under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act that a university's data story requires. Its first customer gave it the strongest endorsement a product can earn, a reluctance to share it: "There was a part of me that was reluctant to help promote it, because I don't want anyone else to have it."

See what one connected platform would let your institution finally see.