

Measurable ease for a complex system.

PayPal helped Indiana University streamline payments while building an enduring business relationship.



Indiana University
Bloomington, IN
iu.edu

“Every one of the more than 35 departments accepting PayPal has its own financial success story. They’re here to educate the students, and we’re freeing them from payment complexities to achieve that mission.”

– RUTH HARPOOL
Indiana University



35+

Number of IU departments accepting PayPal payments

Ruth Harpool is a diligent person. As managing director of treasury operations for Indiana University’s 8 campuses serving over 114,000 students, she has to be. So when, in 2015, she considered adding PayPal to the school’s suite of payment options, she needed assurance that the company could work with IU’s wide range of needs and departments. “We’re a unique industry,” Harpool explains. “If there’s a problem to be found, we’re going to find it. It’s just the nature of our business – we stress-test the heck out of everything.”

What set PayPal apart in Harpool’s mind: The team assigned to IU took the time to build a relationship – and to listen. “From the beginning, they were as eager to learn about higher-education payment needs as we were to learn about PayPal products.” And along the way, they tackled fruit fly sales, PCI DSS compliance, and the challenges and rewards of building a lasting business relationship.

Complex infrastructures, streamlined reporting.

Like most colleges and universities, IU has complex payment infrastructures serving multiple departments and campus merchants. Harpool describes one IU biology research lab that breeds and sells fruit flies to researchers around the world. The complexities of international wire transfers, exchange rates, and fees made it difficult to associate payments and receivables and reconcile accounts. Now, however, says Harpool, “I’m seeing far fewer issues from that department [because] a lot of international buyers use PayPal.”

Multiply that by 35 departments and the impact grows. Across the university, says Harpool, “PayPal saves time for department staff – and for finance staff, who say that reconciling PayPal is easy. If I can get an ‘easy,’ I’m done.”

Much of this ease is due to PayPal’s hierarchical account structure, in which a central “parent” account maintained by the university treasurer retains oversight over all “child” departmental accounts – allowing IU to support individual departments’ reporting and payment receiving needs. Coupled with PayPal’s reporting tools, this significantly eases the daily task of reconciliation. A nightly electronic file shows summary data at the child account level, then automatically posts the net income and expense of each unit to its respective general ledger (GL) account. Explains Harpool, “IU has over 8,000 GL accounts, so accurately creating entries in an automated, lights-out fashion is extremely beneficial.”

Playing a crucial part in PCI DSS compliance.

Credit card transactions processed through PayPal already meet the highest level of security and industry compliance, reducing IU’s overall money and time spent when it comes to payments made through PayPal.

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8,000

Number of general ledger accounts across the university

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Pricing that works for universities.

Harpool especially appreciates PayPal’s ability to meet the university’s pricing needs with a special rate. The result was a strong net positive once the university figured in the savings from reconciliations. “That changed everything,” says Harpool. “It was like falling into a gold mine.”

“We felt well loved.”

Harpool calls PayPal’s personalized service “phenomenal,” highlighting the sales team’s willingness to dive into particulars and tailor solutions to IU’s needs. “To do business with universities,” she says, “you need to have real names and faces and voices. The PayPal team wasn’t in a hurry. They wanted to know where we are and who they’re talking to. It sounds a little corny – but we felt well loved.”

The strong relationship between PayPal and IU is evident in the growing number of university departments offering PayPal as a payment method. “We want to take the time to do it right,” says Harpool. “We’ll grow with PayPal one department, one solution, and one need at a time.”

Learn more about PayPal for higher education.

For more information on how PayPal can provide seamless solutions within the framework of your university, go to paypal.com/highered.

paypal.com/highered