

CASE STUDY

Texas A&M University (TAMU)

› **BUILDING CAREER- READY IT GRADUATES WITH ITIL**



BACKGROUND

Texas A&M University (TAMU), founded in 1876, was the state's first public institution of higher learning and currently has more than 81,000 students enrolled.

It is one of 24 US institutions to hold the triple designation as a land-, sea- and space-grant university, providing \$22bn of economic impact, supporting one in 81 jobs in Texas and attracting one in five research dollars in the state, amounting to \$1.4bn (2024).

Today, TAMU is a research-intensive university "dedicated to sending leaders out into the world prepared to take on the challenges of tomorrow".

CHALLENGES

Companies employing TAMU graduates often commented that their new hires had basic technical skills but needed six to 12 months' training to become fully productive employees. This included sending many of them for ITIL Foundation training.

Sweeney saw that the more marketable skills the university was teaching technology students – such as how to be a good team member, thinking logically and working in multi-cultural situations – was not apparent to employers, causing them to conduct a "guessing game" when it came to recruitment.

DEMONSTRATING ENTRY-LEVEL WORKPLACE COMPETENCY

Texas legislators introduced the "60 x 30" programme, compelling colleges to teach and communicate the marketable skills in their courses, based on standards set by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) – an organization funded by the government to connect graduates with employers.

At that point, NACE defined the skills and competence areas as:

critical thinking and problem solving	oral and written communication	teamworking and collaboration
information technology application	leadership, professionalism/ work ethic	career management

CONNECTING TECHNOLOGY AND BUSINESS VALUE

TAMU's traditional technology management teaching tended to take a functional view of technology (e.g., a focus on databases, networking, server management) while professionals working in IT organizations also recognized the need for value streams and a value chain to integrate functional IT areas and deliver business value.

Sweeney explained: "We had to bring service management concepts into the technology faculty, though this was typically considered more relevant to the business school and, often, learned only when joining the workforce.

"This meant breaking down the sometimes-siloed nature of higher education and defining service management as an academic discipline."

Ultimately, this would involve:

providing higher education technology students with a service management framework from entry level – in effect, ITIL	offering practical certifications with marketable skills and helping students communicate their competency to employers
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OBJECTIVES

Build an interdisciplinary academic capability within a higher education institution that combines theory and professional practice

Increase employment opportunities both pre-graduation and within six months of graduation

Provide training to existing professionals (who also become a source of mentoring and internships for Texas A&M students)

Early delivery of ITIL (Version 5) for students and existing professionals

SOLUTION FROM CLASSROOM TO CAREER

1. CLASSROOM LEARNING

The understanding and adoption of IT and IT service management (ITSM) within the university – much like higher education institutions in general – differs across the two sides of the organization: the administrative and the academic.

While the former operates like many enterprise IT functions, supported by service management underpinned by ITIL, the latter has lacked awareness of service management and ITIL as core disciplines to include in degree courses. Consequently, ITIL knowledge previously didn't exist in the TAMU curriculum.

When asked to help develop TAMU's technology management programme, David Sweeney – TAMU's former Director for Information Technology and current Visiting Professor of the Practice – highlighted the need for ITIL training and certification among the university's technology undergraduates.

2. ITIL TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION

Nine years ago, TAMU introduced ITIL Foundation training and certification as part of its technology degree programme. From there, in 2024, it became the first university to embed ITIL 4 learning in a new undergraduate degree programme – the Information Technology Service Management degree – enabling undergraduates to learn ITIL's management disciplines alongside functional IT areas.

ITIL became the basis for all improvement projects students undertook within the TAMU system – structured around ITIL practices and the continual improvement model within the ITIL framework.

Today, with a fresh demand for ITIL (Version 5) among professionals in the state of Texas – including the transition modules – TAMU is offering training in the new version of ITIL.

"People trained in ITIL 4 are keen to understand the new ideas, concepts and tools in ITIL (Version 5), including the digital product and service management lifecycle, the emphasis on continual improvement and value stream management," said David Sweeney.

"And TAMU students currently beginning their ITIL training and certification journey within ITIL (Version 5) have been "overwhelmingly positive", he added.



3. CAPSTONE PROJECTS

Alongside training and certifying in ITIL, students – as part of their degree programme – had to undertake a capstone project in which students synthesized their knowledge through a real-life experience while providing benefits to companies in Texas.

Students were tasked with agreeing the scope, schedule and deliverables with their chosen company based on a central question – “what do you want to improve?”

The student teams would then outline how the ITIL continual improvement model would work within the project itself and how the company could also integrate the model into its regular work.

Projects were managed through the lens of ITIL and its 34 management practices, with the practice guides helping students to understand and apply the necessary approaches for each practice area, e.g., incident management. This became the basis for improvement recommendations to the company.

Within the more than 50 capstone projects undertaken since 2021, TAMU students learned how to interact with the companies and provide real value.

“Companies gave universally positive feedback for the capstone projects and dozens of students called it the best course in their degree,” Sweeney said.

Tim Ramsey, Director of Information Technology for the College of Agriculture & Life Sciences at Texas A&M University and Director of the Center for Managed Technology Services at Texas A&M AgriLife, said: “Having completed several of the same courses and earned the ITIL certifications myself, I understood the value of the knowledge students were bringing into the programme. What appealed to me most was the opportunity to allow students to apply what they had learned in real organizational environments rather than limiting that learning to classroom simulations. They were able to experience the challenges of working with stakeholders, evaluating existing services, and identifying opportunities for improvement while providing meaningful value to our organization.”

"The students' contributions have helped reinforce a culture of continuous improvement and shared ownership by engaging teams in evaluating and improving the services they provide. Rather than viewing service management as the responsibility of a single group, these capstone projects encouraged collaboration across departments and helped stakeholders better understand how their work contributes to the overall research enterprise[...]"

Tim Ramsey – Director - Center for Managed Technology Services, TAMU

4. EXTENDING ITIL ACROSS THE TAMU SYSTEM

When TAMU became an Academic Accredited Training Partner, it gained the ability to train people in ITIL, including TAMU's in-house staff and professionals in the wider TAMU education ecosystem. This was a large cohort with more than 1,000 IT personnel across the TAMU System.

It also made ITIL training and certification available to selected external companies and organizations, such as public schools and hospital groups.

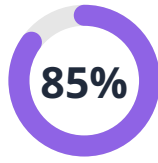
"As an instructor and faculty member, I care about producing graduates with an advantage in the workplace. Many former students who are now in the workforce understand what ITIL gives them and how it helps them operate better in their environment. With an understanding of an organization's broader context and professional practice which their peers don't have, it means they just click in their roles."

David Sweeney – Former Director for Information Technology and current Visiting Professor of the Practice, TAMU

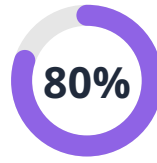
RESULTS AND METRICS



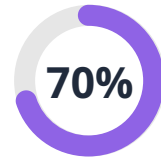
Student employment within six months of graduation (inclusive)



Students employed in a technology-related position



Student employment before graduation



Student internships that led to jobs at the same company

ESTABLISHING SERVICE MANAGEMENT AS AN ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE

PeopleCert sponsored researchers at the **2026 TechSummit conference**, resulting in published papers and the first steps towards recognition of service management as an academic discipline. This process would allow more higher education institutions to embed service management and ITIL as part of their technology management degree programmes.

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