



Beacon College Doubles Enrollment from Fleet Savings

FLEET SIZE: **21** INDUSTRY: **HIGHER ED**

When Beacon College brought in Eric Johnston as director of transportation, they faced a challenge we often see in the education sector—transforming fleet operations to support ambitious institutional growth. The board had laid out a comprehensive strategic plan centered on accreditation, academic excellence, and campus development.

Beacon College, established in 1989, serves a unique student population with learning differences like dyslexia, autism, and ADHD.

The transportation department's mandate went beyond just moving students between buildings. They needed to create an efficient, reliable shuttle system connecting residential

halls, academic facilities, the library, and student commons.

"Most students don't have their own vehicle and rely on the school's transportation system to get them around," Johnston said. "It's also important for their safety as Florida's heat, humidity and sudden thunderstorms can be overwhelming.

Beacon College's transportation system wasn't just running shuttles—it was delivering measurable value that contributed to its ranking among College Consensus's top 30 institutions serving students with learning disabilities in 2020. The college continues to receive accolades for its academic excellence and value for students.

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Launching RTA Software, Again

Johnston's first challenge was comprehensive fleet management—overseeing the college's shuttle buses, vans, and other vehicles while coordinating with external maintenance vendors and maintaining detailed records for compliance with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT).

Based on his prior experience, Johnston implemented RTA's fleet management system, a solution he had successfully used in his previous role as fleet manager at an Ohio bakery.

"I was able to bring RTA on board [at the bakery] and get the shop turned to a paperless shop environment so that the mechanics could clock in and out of jobs, build their own work orders and order parts," Johnston said. "From the day I started at Beacon and went through the vehicle history records stored in the filing cabinets, I knew RTA would allow us to track work orders more easily and to make Beacon's fleet operation much more efficient."

Reliable Records That Impress

The digital record-keeping proved especially valuable when dealing with multiple repair facilities. Since the college's primary maintenance provider isn't always available for urgent repairs, Johnston sometimes must route vehicles to alternative repair shops.

"It's nice to pull up the vehicle record and see the last person who worked on it. So, you can recoup some warranty if you need to do that," Johnston said.

The new record-keeping system proved its worth during FDOT safety inspections.

During their first audit after Johnston implemented RTA, inspectors were particularly impressed with the comprehensive maintenance documentation for each vehicle. The system was so effective that inspectors inquired about RTA's details, planning to recommend it to other maintenance vendors who weren't meeting documentation requirements.



For me, RTA is worth the peace of mind it offers me as a fleet manager. When it comes time for the FDOT inspections, I know I don't have to worry about going through all the paper files. We know the PMs are up to snuff, and everything's being tracked.

Eric Johnston, Director of Transportation
Beacon College

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Improving Access to Grants

The college acquires buses primarily through state and county grants, which fund 90% of each vehicle's purchase price. However, the grant process is lengthy - often taking two years or more - and requires buses to reach 10 years of service or 200,000 miles before replacement.

RTA helps Johnston's department maintain grant eligibility through its comprehensive tracking capabilities by ensuring compliance with FDOT's strict fuel usage and maintenance records documentation requirements.

By meeting FDOT inspection requirements, Beacon College became eligible for more state grants, which allowed the institution to grow enrollment from 285 undergraduates in 2015 to 515 in 2024.

Johnston's improvements to the transportation department, including implementing RTA's software, contributed to Beacon College's growing reputation.

- Ranked among the nation's top 30 colleges for students with learning disabilities by College Consensus (April 2020)
- Listed among BestColleges.com's top Florida institutions
- Named a leading regional college by U.S. News and World Report
- Recognized by BestValueSchools.com for exceptional return on investment for students with learning disabilities
- Provides over 4,000 student trips annually

"We accomplish these outcomes by working to create a learning environment that offers the academic and personal support services these students need to achieve their goals," Johnston said.

OUTCOMES

- › Beacon College grew its enrollment from 285 undergraduates in 2015 to 515 in 2024 by leveraging fleet savings and improved grant eligibility
- › Implementing RTA's fleet management system improved record-keeping and compliance, streamlining maintenance processes and supporting growth information





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