

Unlocking Clarity on Campus

Proven Optics' University Use Case



The Impact of Implementation

Across higher education, the pressure to do more with less is intensifying. In the UK, the Office for Students (OfS) issued a report in May 2025 stating “We are seeing the third consecutive annual decline in the sector’s finances.”

Universities are expected to deliver cutting-edge digital services, support expansive research initiatives, and maintain day-to-day operations, all while managing constrained budgets and increasingly complex cost structures. The European University Association (EUA) reported in April 2025 that less than half of those surveyed expect core funding to grow, nearly a third expecting it to flatline and nearly 20% expecting it to fall.

Yet for many institutions, the tools used to manage IT finances haven’t evolved. Spreadsheets, legacy systems, and disconnected processes dominate, leaving IT leaders without clear answers to critical questions: What does it really cost to support a student online? How are shared services being consumed by schools of business? Are research grants accurately absorbing their fair share of IT overhead?



Proven Optics offers a modern solution to these challenges with a suite of purpose-built IT Financial Management (ITFM) applications built natively on the ServiceNow platform. Unlike traditional software add-ons or third-party tools, Proven Optics integrates directly with the systems many universities already use – including ITSM, CMDB, asset management, and planning tools. This approach eliminates the need for new infrastructure, speeds up deployment, and embeds ITFM directly into operational workflows. For universities, this means faster time-to-value and financial insight delivered exactly where decisions are made.

64% of UK higher education institutions (and nearly two-thirds across Europe) could be in deficit by 2026-27 without enhanced cost controls and financial planning tools.



Modeling IT Costs for the Way Universities Operate

Higher education institutions are complex, with services delivered across academic units, central administration, research centers, and auxiliary operations. Proven Optics enables universities to build accurate, transparent cost models that reflect this reality. Institutions can allocate labor, infrastructure, licensing, and shared services across departments, programs, or funding streams, bringing clarity to what was previously a black box.

For example, one major university used Proven Optics to analyze the true cost of supporting its online learning infrastructure. By capturing costs related to the Learning Management System (LMS), help desk support, and cloud hosting, they were able to align spending directly with the Provost's office and better allocate funds across colleges.

This level of granularity fosters institutional trust and improves cross-departmental accountability. Instead of using broad, generic allocations, IT leaders can provide service-level insights, helping stakeholders understand how and why resources are consumed and where adjustments are needed. It also enables institutions to tie costs directly to strategic goals, such as enhancing student experience or expanding digital learning access.

A Smarter Way to Budget & Forecast

Budgeting in academia is uniquely complex. Institutions must align with fiscal calendars, track performance across academic terms, and manage diverse revenue sources like tuition fees, grants, and state funding which is increasingly under pressure. Proven Optics provides real-time budgeting and forecasting tools designed to meet these challenges. With these capabilities, universities can track actuals versus forecasts, monitor spending trends, and adapt quickly to changes in enrollment, funding availability, or institutional priorities.

One university uses Proven Optics to link IT budgeting with business capabilities, such as instructional delivery, research enablement, and student services, allowing leadership to make proactive decisions instead of reacting to end-of-year surprises. This approach not only increased transparency but also strengthened strategic alignment between finance and IT, ultimately supporting better student outcomes and improved resource planning.

Clear Billing That Promotes Accountability

When it comes to billing, many universities struggle with transparency. Flat-rate IT fees or opaque service charges often lead to confusion and frustration at the departmental level. Proven Optics changes this by automating chargeback and showback models based on real usage data. Universities can configure billing logic to reflect their unique needs, whether it's billing academic units for storage, research centers for high-performance computing, or departments for application licensing.

This shift has a powerful effect on institutional culture. When departments see a detailed, defensible breakdown of their IT costs, they become more intentional about consumption. In the case study university, this level of transparency encouraged academic deans to take greater ownership of their IT footprint, leading to more productive discussions about funding, service levels, and value creation. IT, once viewed as a cost center, began to be recognized as a strategic partner.

A Model That Grows With You

Proven Optics provides tailored guidance, hands-on training, expert service hours, and continuous updates to the cost model, ensuring that institutions aren't just implementing ITFM but optimizing it long-term. As business needs evolve, the Proven Optics team works alongside campus stakeholders to expand use cases, improve data quality, and unlock deeper insights.

In practice, this means moving from reactive reporting to predictive planning. The university is now exploring how IT cost data can inform future enrollment strategies and technology investments, tying financial decisions directly to institutional growth. With Proven Optics' Cost Model, they're not just managing today's costs; they're building the financial intelligence needed for tomorrow's challenges.

The Bottom Line for Universities

Whether you're a public research institution or a private liberal arts institution, Proven Optics helps transform ITFM from a fragmented, manual process into a powerful strategic capability. By combining real-time cost modeling, intuitive budgeting, transparent billing, and ongoing optimization, all inside the ServiceNow platform, universities gain the clarity needed to make smarter, more strategically aligned decisions across the institution.

One university's journey with Proven Optics serves as proof: with full visibility, strategic budgeting, and cost accountability, they're driving meaningful, lasting change across campus. IT isn't just a cost anymore; it's a lever for institutional success.

