KAINOS SMART CASE STUDY

Cornell University Delivers Continuous Workday Expansion with Comprehensive, Agile Support

Project Requirements

Keep HRIS and SMEs focused on strategic priorities

Reduce testing effort during major updates

Mitigate risk around weekly releases and security

Project Results
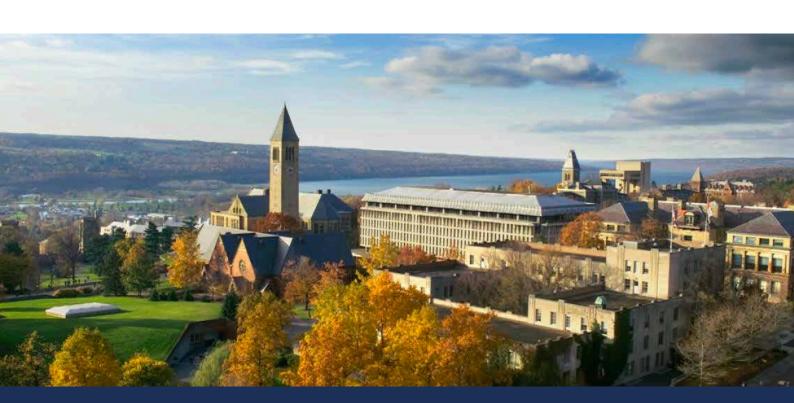
700%
increase in update
testing coverage

92%
reduction in
hands-on testers

1000s
of manhours
saved annually

35k+
BP and security
tests run/year

> "...as your Workday footprint grows so does your support footprint, and Kainos Smart is one of the tools that you can use to keep that gap as small as possible.

Seth Brahler – Senior Director of HRIS

About Cornell University

Founded in 1865, Cornell University is a privately endowed research institution headquartered in Ithaca, New York. A partner of the State University of New York (SUNY), it has seven undergraduate units and four graduate and professional units in Ithaca, two medical graduate and professional units in New York City, and one in Doha, Qatar. The Cornell Tech campus in New York City is the latest addition. Cornell employs 9K faculty and staff and has an enrolment of over 21K students worldwide.

Growth constrained by bandwidth

In 2013, Cornell launched Workday HCM and Payroll. They found the platform as flexible and nimble as expected, and they were prepared for the initial responsibilities of system testing—progressively building up a collection of test cases and a large group of SMEs from across campus to help with manual testing. But HRIS soon discovered that the more successful Cornell's Workday implementation was, the more difficult it became to keep up with growing demands for support.

"In Workday, you're always implementing," says Seth. "Whether it's large or small, you implement something new and you're proud of that, but that is now another piece of the puzzle that you need to keep an eye on. As your Workday footprint grows, so does your testing and support footprint."

By 2016, Cornell was using dozens of SMEs at a time to manually complete over 300 regression test scripts during every bi-annual Workday update, and unexpected support requirements had encroached on their ability to enhance and expand Workday as envisioned. Principal among these were requests from integrated systems owners. Dozens of systems relied on Workday for employee data, and each time a third-party system upgraded or underwent its own configuration change, those system teams would request test cases from the HRIS team in order to complete their test cycles. To oblige, HRIS would have to stop working on Workday optimsations to push the necessary data into Workday and downstream—manually stepping through dozens of multi-step transactions in a time-consuming and laborious process.

"None of these software update cycles or functional changes were in sync with Workday's update schedule," explains Seth, "so we were spending a lot of time helping to keep other systems up and running. Meanwhile, timelines for important items on our strategic roadmap were being elongated."

A growing sense of risk

As the gap between available resources and support and maintenance requirements grew, so did concerns about risk exposure. Workday innovates quickly, releasing weekly updates that also need testing. For Cornell, consistently keeping up with this pace of change wasn't feasible with a manual testing approach.

"We couldn't validate every weekly Workday update," explains Seth. "We just didn't have the time and resources, and I felt there had to be a better way to do this."

The Impact of Kainos Smart

Cornell wanted a testing solution that would help them keep their teams focused on the university's strategic priorities, reduce the effort required to test major updates, and mitigate the risk around weekly Workday updates and security changes.

Since adopting Kainos Smart, Cornell has increased its testing capability by 700% during each major Workday update while simultaneously reducing the hands-on staff required to run those regression tests by 92%. This has saved the university hundreds of hours of manual testing each year (in terms of its original testing capacity) and thousands of hours annually (in terms of its current testing capacity). Importantly, this has freed up valuable staff to address other needs. It has also enabled the HRIS team to provide agile, robust support to implementation, training, and third-party systems teams while continuing to deliver their own Workday optimisation and roadmap efforts.

With a mature, strategic testing approach in place, it was important to Cornell that any automated solution would not require them to toss away their work to-date and start from scratch. "There were other solutions that with a lot of manual effort we could have made work," explains Seth. "But we liked the way that Smart could integrate within our ecosystem, could replicate the highly customised scripts that we had already written, and could run through our unique business processes. Their demo really caught our eye. We felt that the Kainos Smart team understood the Workday software very well, what a typical Workday customer has on their plate when it comes to maintaining the integrity of their configuration, and what we specifically were wanting to achieve."

Year-round confidence. Mere weeks of effort.

With Smart's automation, Cornell has increased the breadth and depth of its update testing as well as introduced testing coverage of weekly updates. A team of four HRIS staff now run approximately 400 BP regression tests after each weekly software update as well as 2,500 regression tests during each bi-annual update. "During each major Workday update, my staff are able to complete those tests in just two weeks. That was a big win for us, because we no longer depend on SMEs for regression testing, and it gives them and us more free time to focus on investigating new features or to complete other high-value work."

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Security testing has also improved. Before Smart, Cornell had conducted some security testing, but it proved difficult to perform regularly, at scale, and at a level of detail that gave the team true confidence in their security settings. With Smart, Cornell now carries out an average of 1,500 security tests every month. "This was an area of risk where Kainos Smart really helped us. We can now confirm that security changes that we are making don't inadvertently open something deep in the system—something that you couldn't possibly test manually. It has really helped us to keep the integrity of our security intact."
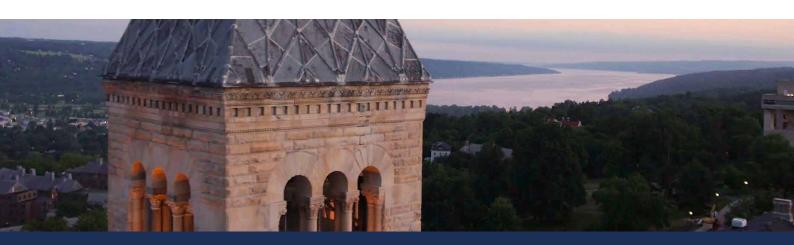
Sustainable, scalable support for deployments, integrations and training

In January 2018, Cornell University launched Workday Time Tracking, a large implementation project comprising months of effort across multiple teams. The HRIS team found that by using Smart's reusable test packs they were able to improve team focus during the project.

"The repurposing of our Smart test cases and test pack functionality has been phenomenal," explains Harland Harris, HRIS Configuration Specialist at Cornell. "During the project, we were able to reuse our hire BP test packs and interim BP packs to repeatedly enter large numbers of fake hires into the two implementation tenants and push time on to time cards. This gave the implementation team essential data to work with in order to test processes like editing, correcting and approving time and to validate that the configuration was handling that information and those changes accurately before we pushed Time Tracking to production."

"Halfway through the project we had processed about 2,600 test cases, and the fact that we could run those at the push of a button rather than pull staff into manual testing was a major advantage," adds Seth. "It helped us stay on track and keep the implementation team focused on building the system. We estimated that using Smart saved us about 175 hours of effort during the project."

Smart's reusable tests and synthetic data functionality have also transformed the HRIS team's ability to support integration systems and Workday training teams, as well as how they deliver that support. Smart's reusable test packs give them the agility to quickly respond to requests, while its synthetic data functionality cuts down on data prep and provides enhanced data protection.

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"Increasingly we're using Smart's automation to push fake data into Sandbox for the purposes of testing, training and case management," explains Harland. "It's like next-level risk mitigation, above and beyond our security settings, that helps us prevent real information being exposed to users."

"For example, when groups of new users join the university, our colleges will hold training sessions. With Smart we create test packs of fake organisations, fake managers, and fake employees of various types. Then they use that data in the testing environment to demonstrate how our Workday system works. They're extremely appreciative because they can show new staff how it works as opposed to relying on PowerPoint presentations and handouts. Trainees benefit by being able to touch the system and play around, and we know that data is completely safe for them to see."

"Likewise, we have over 200 integrations now, and Smart lets us quickly provide integration teams with test data for testing their updates and changes. We even use Smart sometimes for case management in Workday. Rather than having to mask things, we'll push in some fake data, and then say 'The business process is failing here. Check it out.'"

"Overall, the support we've received from the Smart team has been fantastic," says Seth. "They've acted as a partner throughout our contract, which is very rare. More typically, a provider gets your software up and running and then you don't hear from them again. But the team at Smart has stuck with us. As I mentioned earlier, as your Workday footprint grows so does your support footprint, and Kainos Smart is one of the tools that you can use to keep that gap as small as possible."

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