Sprawling across 68 scenic acres in Sioux City, Iowa, **Morningside College** has been designated one of the Midwest's "Best Regional Colleges" in the U.S. News & World Report's college rankings since 2005 and has been designated a "Best Midwestern College" by The Princeton Review since 2003. Additionally, Morningside was one of 10 small, four-year colleges in the United States named to the honor roll for The Chronicle of Higher Education's 2009 Great Colleges to Work For survey.

Those accolades underscore the unique experience that Morningside offers. With an impressive student-teacher ratio and high-caliber faculty, Morningside academics are both rigorous and personal. The College also offers a variety of enrichment opportunities outside the classroom. Ultimately, Morningside provides an experience that "cultivates a passion for life-long learning and a dedication to ethical leadership and civic responsibility."

Behind the scenes, the College has relied on software from **Aptron Corporation** to power its computer systems—and its success—for more than 25 of its 115 years. Just as the College provides highly personalized education to its students, Aptron delivers software tailored to Morningside's ever-changing needs.

Total integration and flexibility

Andy Heiser has two roles at Morningside: Director of IT and Dean of the Learning Center. His dual responsibilities give him a unique perspective on Aptron and its products. In his IT role, he values the integrity and transparency of Aptron people, calling the company "the best vendor I have." In his role as a dean, he's an end-user of the system, and he appreciates its strengths in that area, too.

"Aptron has tailored the software to our school and our workflow," he notes. "As a user, it just works. It's seamless. That's what makes it great."

As the College's Director of Administrative Computing, Rosalyn Smith has worked with Aptron products and people for 20 years and voices great appreciation for both. She was involved in the original installation of AIMSTM, the Academic Institution Management System, and CampusWeb™, the Web-based self-service portal for students, faculty, and staff. Since then, she's been part of the ongoing migration to **Collēgix™** the newest ERP solution from Aptron featuring state-of-the-art user interfaces for both back-office applications and self-service processing.

From a product perspective, Smith lauds the integration among the College's systems and offices. With a single database, all the systems are able to use the same information. For

example, Smith notes, Financial Aid enters awards into the system and the Alumni Development office enters gifts, and those updates automatically post to the Business Office.

“Integration is more efficient and more accurate. We’ve benefited from that for the last 25 years, and we take it for granted,” Smith explains. “I think [Aptron] can sell one module on its own, but the beauty really is the whole package.”

Equally important is the product’s inherent flexibility. Over the years, Morningside has partnered with Aptron to tailor the product to the school’s evolving requirements. Sometimes those requirements are driven by external forces, such as changes in federal and state regulations. Other times, the requirements arise from the school’s unique processes—or creative ideas from **Collēgix** users.

In interacting with peers from other institutions, Smith has heard plenty of gripes about other administrative software: “I’ve heard other people complain about what they can’t do with their product,” she says. “We don’t have those complaints.”

Tailoring the software

With Aptron, Smith notes, she has direct access to **Collēgix** developers—so making enhancements is relatively fast and cost-efficient. And the end products work smoothly, consistently, and reliably for Morningside’s base of 100 users.

In reflecting on Morningside’s partnership with Aptron, Smith cites a number of examples where **Collēgix** is delivering tangible benefits for the College:

Morningside is leveraging the **Collēgix Recruiter** module to empower college and athletic recruiters to track applicants and manage their work on the road. Smith says the College’s 60 budget officers appreciate the package’s Budget Manager module. Each budget manager has access to his or her own budget, and all of them tie back with the College’s Business Office.

Aptron built a special Web interface to help Morningside’s graduate school better manage its 200 to 300 classes—many of which are online. The module gives administrators visibility to all grad school classes. While they can’t see student grades, they are able to see student data necessary to properly balance enrollment.

Another custom enhancement: a financial aid estimator that enables students and their families to provide about five pieces of information and then receive a high-level estimate of their anticipated aid and expected family contribution.

Working in partnership with the College, Aptron also developed an electronic solution for Morningside's Early Support System. The previous approach was manual and paper-based; faculty often lamented that the paperwork was slow, cumbersome, and ineffective. Through the new online system, faculty can quickly and easily indicate which students are having trouble with attendance or performance—before it's too late to address the issues.

'Developing' success

Indeed, Morningside users—particularly those who rely heavily on **Collēgix** to do their jobs—appreciate the opportunity to tailor the product to their specific needs. As Vice President for Institutional Advancement, Tom Rice leverages **Collēgix** to help drive significant results for the College. Morningside's "Investing in the Future" campaign generated $31 million, while the more recent "This is Our Moment" campaign brought in more than $45.2 million for capital improvements, scholarships, and the College's endowment. In 2009 and 2010, the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) recognized Morningside for exceptional educational fundraising programs.

"The online alumni community powered by **Collēgix** provides easy access for our alumni to keep in touch and update their record," Rice notes. "I like the flexibility of **Collēgix**, which allows me to fine-tune campaign reports. My development officers appreciate the ability to access donor information when they're on the road."

Looking to the future

President John Reynders has articulated a vision for Morningside to grow from 1,200 to 1,400 students by 2015. With such an ambitious vision, everyone in the College is accountable for driving growth. But Reynders and his team are confident that the ongoing support of Aptron and **Collēgix** will help enable the College's success.

"For Morningside College, **Aptron Corporation** continues to be a key partner—one that enables us to meet our mission and fulfill our commitments to our students, alumni, faculty, and staff," said President Reynders. "We value the flexibility and reliability of Aptron products, as well as the integrity and skills of its principals and other employees.