Case Study

Advanced Imaging Solutions assists Southwestern Michigan College in bold printer fleet upgrade

Challenges
- **IT department was spending too much time maintaining large desktop printer fleet**
- **Outdated network printers were causing network crashes**
- **Numerous projects were being printed off-campus**
- **Complaints about poor print quality**

Solutions
- **Replace desktop printers and outdated network printers with centralized high-volume MFPs**
- **Introduce color to reduce the school's need to send print jobs off-campus**

"We went from 120 low-volume devices to 24 high-volume systems. Now everyone is happy."

—Ron Young
Executive Director of
Computing
Southwestern Michigan College

Southwestern Michigan College

"Excellence with a personal touch" is a working principle that guides the staff and faculty at Southwestern Michigan College (SMC). At SMC, there are no teaching assistants, no 400-seat lecture halls. Most of the classes are fewer than 25 students which means that the students know their instructors and the instructors know them. The 240-acre Dowagiac Campus brings together thousands of students, many of whom juggle work or family commitments along with school. Southwestern Michigan College also has a Niles area campus where students get the same SMC experience with small classes and personal attention at a location that is convenient for Indiana residents.

When Ron Young started his position as Executive Director of Computing at Southwestern Michigan College in October 2004, he took on the responsibility of updating the school's printing processes. One of Young's first opportunities to make a big impact on the school's document workflow and costs was the proliferation of desktop printers—120 of them. "We had 1.2 printers per person", he said. SMC's IT staff spent countless hours maintaining and troubleshooting printer issues. Young's other print-related challenges included complaints about poor print quality, numerous print jobs going off-campus and a large number of old network printers that caused periodic network crashes.

It was clear that Young needed to reduce SMC's dependence on inefficient and high-maintenance desktop printers. Fortunately, Young had the vision and fortitude to undertake the task. He enlisted the support of the college's executive committee to make the transition from desktop printers to centrally-located MFPs. "The executive committee announced the conversion at a staff meeting. This meeting was key to making it possible for me to take the printers," said Young. The executive committee said, "Convenience is not an excuse to keep your printer." The executive committee was the first group to relinquish their printers. Even with this example, it was an emotional trial for many. "I heard every possible excuse why a person needed their own printer. I would find notes on printers that said 'Don't take me' and 'I am happy where I am'," said Young.

To implement the migration, Advanced Imaging Solutions mapped placement of current equipment and charted total document volumes. With this information in hand, it was easy to pinpoint the best placement for high-volume Lanier digital MFPs that combined copy, print, scan and fax capabilities. Six of the MFPs have color capabilities.

Results
- **Lower maintenance costs and increased capabilities**
- **Visibility and accountability for print costs**
- **Reduced cost-per-page from $0.20 to $0.05**

"Now everyone is happy," said Young. The two campuses have trimmed their printer fleet from 120 desktop printers to 24 digital MFPs. The IT staff spends very little time maintaining the MFPs and the effect of the

connected MFPs on the network has been minimal. The staff and faculty appreciates the high print quality and color capabilities of the MFPs. Color and black & white projects can now be printed on-demand at a lower cost with faster turnaround than local print shops could provide.

Ironically, convenience has been a big benefit of the MFPs. The staff prints, staples, sorts and creates slip sheets without leaving their desks. Due to the lock/print feature, each office worker can send numerous projects to the MFP during the work day and print them out at one time. "It has been a pleasant learning curve for people to realize that printing doesn't cost more than copying. They don't have to go to the machine to make copies but can make prints from their desktop," said Young.

Tracking cost savings for supplies had been difficult since departments were buying toner cartridges and other printer supplies from their petty cash. Printing costs were hidden, too, but no longer due to the SmartNet monitor tracking feature on the Lanier systems. Document costs are now tracked by device and department. "When the MFPs were first installed, some departments were going through their annual printing budgets in three months," said Young." The new tracking feature quickly exposed the reams and reams of wasted prints. Sometimes an instructor would print hundreds of copies and never pick them up."

The successful implementation of the new printer fleet provided a strong momentum for future technology upgrades at Southwestern Michigan College. SMC is currently evaluating a student print program from Advanced Imaging Solutions—the new print tracking system would allow students to purchase cards, add value to existing cards, and make print, copy and fax purchases.

Document Technology Made Easy