

The importance of having a campus-wide cloud strategy



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With the changing demographics of the new student, cuts in funding models, and declining completion rates colleges and universities are facing unprecedented challenges. To continue thriving, institutions must adapt to support new learning models and meet service expectations of students who expect the same high quality of service from their institutions that they are accustomed to with other big-ticket items.

Supporting new innovative learning experiences and servicing digital native students requires a cloud strategy. However, as cloud technology adoption rocketed across other industries, higher education has been slow to transition. Our industry had always had a reputation for being impervious to change. But with the widespread use of technology in today's society, rising computer costs and shifting demographics of students, some institutions may be left behind if they don't embrace change and make the leap to cloud.

New mobile-centric student

Today's students are digital natives. They are mobile-centric, technology savvy and expect their academic institution to be as well. Over half of modern students are not the traditional 17-21-year-old of the past. Many of these students are older and more experienced in life and often have commitments to work and family that require flexibility in how, when and where they learn. Students now require online learning, collaboration tools and constant mobile access throughout their educational career.

Do more with less

The rising costs of education, declining public funding and mounting student debt have created a crisis in higher education, forcing budgets to be continuously evaluated and creating a mantra to do more with less across institutions.

Furthermore, many institutions are looking at significant data center upgrades including network infrastructure and storage for their on-premise systems to support the scalability and connectivity required for modern learning.

Providing online education is critical to staying competitive and attracting the contemporary student. However, e-learning applications often require mobile connectivity that can overstretch outdated networks. As colleges reexamine IT budgets and resources, cloud computing is considered the most feasible solution.

Any initial investments in cloud technology often dwarf the ongoing expenditures needed to run and staff a state-of-the-art data center.

Reliable, scalable, and secure

Scalability is one of the most significant advantages of cloud for higher education institutions. Also, the speed of deploying new systems or new resources is much faster in the cloud than an on-premise solution.

Commercial data centers replace their infrastructure every two to three years to ensure they are running on latest and fastest equipment. Most institutions don't have the budget to upgrade that frequently.

Commercial data centers offer redundant infrastructure and often have parallel design that can be worked on, upgraded or replaced without any downtime. Standard fail-over and high availability are built in, so if a hardware crashes, everything continues to run.

When disaster strikes, institutions that are leveraging the cloud model don't have to worry that their servers will be affected. They have the benefit of cloud's disaster recovery and business continuity features to mitigate local catastrophe.

Security is another cloud advantage for institutions. Systems in the cloud typically have better intrusion detection, better firewall monitoring and management, have critical certifications like ISO 27001, 27017, and 27018, and meet compliance requirements like SSAE-16/18, HIPAA, and PCI, offer data encryption at rest, and they're monitored 24/7. Vendors also employ on-staff data security experts.

IT available to support campus initiatives

IT departments that make a move to the cloud find that they no longer have to spend vast amounts of time on software maintenance and version upgrades. Resources are freed up to focus on the core mission of supporting administration, faculty and students.

Cross-campus collaboration

With the cloud, applications and data are no longer siloed, so data is easily shared across the departments and accessed by mobile devices, which fosters collaboration across the campus. Admissions data is no longer separate from advancement or finance.

Centralized data also enables institutions to be more personalized with students and the ability to track students through their educational journey right into the workforce. This helps build stronger relationships between the academic institution and the student and bolsters the opportunity for alumni to give back.

Future-proof

As new technologies come to market such artificial intelligence and Internet of Things (IoT) applications with cloud computing, you will be ready to implement quickly.

Moving to the cloud provides a win for both student and institutional success. The cloud enables the digital business capabilities that will help differentiate the student experience by being more engaged, responsive, and connected to students as well as those that are supporting the back-office.