Empowering faculty and staff with desktop technology

University of Maryland University College has delivered a fast, low-risk desktop transformation, helping faculty and staff increase their productivity

The increasing demands of a skilled labor market mean that more people than ever are choosing to pursue a college education. While recent high school graduates may opt for full-time study, people in other age groups and circumstances need more flexible programs based on part-time and distance learning.

In the 1990s, University of Maryland University College (UMUC) helped transform higher education by becoming one of the first universities in the United States to offer online degree programs. Since then, it has delivered degree-level courses to tens of thousands of students from around the world — from working professionals to single mothers to servicemen and women — to pursue a college degree while maintaining their busy lives. Today, UMUC has the largest enrollment of any public university in the United States and serves more than 93,000 students worldwide.

To provide the best educational experience for its students, UMUC operates a large, distributed IT infrastructure. This includes thousands of desktops used by faculty and staff members to support the education of students, both face-to-face and online via the university's learning management system.

With support for the university's desktop operating system, Windows XP, coming to an end, and with 800 legacy devices unable to efficiently support the latest Microsoft® desktop software, UMUC needed to deliver a far-reaching desktop refresh.

Ivey Butler, senior director for client relationship management and project lead at UMUC, says, "Faculty members and other staff across the U.S. were experiencing slow application performance, and we were inundated with support requests related to both hardware and software issues. We needed to standardize and upgrade our desktop environment based on the latest hardware and Microsoft software to help staff increase their productivity and

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> *Ivey Butler, Senior Director for Client Relationship Management and Project Lead, UMUC*

Customer profile

University of Maryland University College

Company	University of Maryland University College
Industry	Higher Education
Country	United States
Faculty	218
Staff	1,072
Website	www.umuc.edu

Challenge

To enhance IT services for faculty and staff across the United States, University of Maryland University College (UMUC) needed to replace out-of-lifecycle desktop hardware and software quickly and efficiently, and with minimal risk of downtime to staff services.

Solution

UMUC engaged Dell™ Infrastructure Consulting Services to create new Windows 7 desktop images and deploy them on 800 new Dell desktops, laptops and ultrabooks and 300 existing PCs.

Benefits

- Delivering an efficient, low-risk desktop transformation
- Accelerating project delivery
- Helping staff succeed with the right devices
- Increasing productivity with better app performance
- Maximizing service uptime with faster issue resolution
- Driving efficiency and cost savings through desktop standardization

Solutions featured

- Desktop Computing
- Deployment Services
- Infrastructure Consulting Services

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>
> *Beulah Daniel, Director of IT Customer Support, UMUC*

reduce our support workloads and costs. As an additional challenge, we needed to deliver our desktop transformation extremely quickly before the end of the fiscal year to ensure the required funding would still be available, while minimizing the risk of disruption to critical staff- and student-facing services."

Delivering an efficient, low-risk desktop transformation

After review and consideration, UMUC selected Dell as the partner to upgrade its desktops. Beulah Daniel, director of IT customer support at UMUC, says, "We have had very positive experiences working with Dell in the past, giving us confidence they could help us through every stage of our planned desktop renewal, from planning and selection of endpoint devices, to project management, deployment and ongoing support. Having a single point of contact for desktop consultancy, procurement, integration and migration meant we could deliver our project faster and more efficiently with Dell, and with less risk of downtime and disruption."

As part of internal assessment planning, UMUC undertook an in-depth review of its existing desktop estate. This revealed that roughly 800 legacy desktops and laptops had reached the end of their useful lifecycle and would not efficiently be able to support Windows 7, UMUC's chosen desktop operating system. To make its environment ready for Windows 7, UMUC chose to replace its out-of-lifecycle machines with 300 Dell OptiPlex 9010 desktops, 470 Dell Latitude E6330 laptops and 30 lightweight Dell XPS 13 L322x ultrabooks, which will support users' computing needs for the next three to four years.

The remaining 300 Dell desktops in UMUC's stateside fleet had sufficient storage and processing power to support Windows 7. However, to streamline desktop management and support and provide a great user experience, these needed to be migrated to the same standardized Windows 7 images that would be used for UMUC's new Dell systems.

Accelerating project delivery

To migrate its new and existing workstations to Windows 7 on time, on budget and with minimal business risk, UMUC took advantage of Dell Infrastructure Consulting Services and Dell Windows Migration Services. Prior to Dell's arrival on site, UMUC spent several weeks conducting internal application assessment reviews. IT team members worked with university departments to review and confirm existing applications, while also conducting onsite compatibility and regression testing within the current environments.

To prepare for the migration, Dell undertook extensive image engineering work. Over six weeks, Dell used the Microsoft Deployment Toolkit and its patented Dell Optimized Deployment technology to produce Windows 7 images for six models of Dell workstations and laptops. The team

Technology at work

Services
Infrastructure Consulting Services
- End-User Computing
- Windows Migration
Deployment Services
- End-User Deployment Services

Hardware
Dell OptiPlex 9010 desktops
Dell Latitude E6330 laptops
Dell XPS 13 L322x ultrabooks

Software
Microsoft® Office 2010
Windows 7

then created automated installation procedures for 10 application profiles, with up to 10 packaged applications in each profile, all including Microsoft Office 2010 productivity applications. The different images were designed to meet the specific application needs of different groups of faculty and staff across the university.

With the Windows 7 images and packaged applications ready to go, UMUC and the Dell Windows Migration Services team rolled out the new desktops and deployed Windows 7 images on new and existing machines. This process, which took a total of seven weeks, included a pilot installation of several workstations at a test site, followed by phased implementations of hundreds of Dell endpoints at four UMUC sites. All of the new Dell systems were preloaded with the required Windows 7 images and application packages at the Dell factory, enabling plug-and-play deployment, with an average of only 30 minutes of downtime for end users.

UMUC was able to deploy its new PCs and workstations, and update its fleet of desktops across the U.S. to Windows 7 and Office 2010 in 13 weeks, meeting its end-of-fiscal-year deployment target. "We were able to complete the project quickly and effectively with Dell for lots of reasons," says Daniel. "The Dell team provided the partnership we needed, with a dedicated project manager, in-depth knowledge of Microsoft technologies and deployment, and a single point of contact and accountability for all transformation activities. We were impressed with the capabilities and commitment of the Dell team and our Dell project manager, who helped us overcome a number of logistical challenges and, ultimately, achieve success."

Helping staff succeed with the right devices

By selecting the right combination of Dell desktops and laptops, the UMUC IT team has dramatically improved the user experience and increased opportunities for home and remote working. "We were able to meet the needs of specific end users with different Dell products, helping them work more productively," says Daniel. "We have given fixed staff durable Dell desktops, and we provided robust laptops for staff who commute or regularly work from home. For our most mobile employees, we have provided lightweight Dell ultrabooks, which are very easy to carry, allowing them to work anywhere, anytime."

UMUC is also benefitting from the capabilities of Dell systems. "We can push out updates to Dell desktops and laptops even when they are turned off, helping us manage our desktop estate more easily and stay compliant with patching requirements," says Daniel. "We also get an extra layer of security with Dell Data Encryption, which further protects our sensitive data."

Increasing productivity with better app performance

UMUC users have noticed increased application performance improvements with the new Dell hardware, helping them work more productively. "Machines boot up faster now, and our Microsoft Office and other applications run faster on Windows 7 and the Dell hardware," says Butler. "We can also provide enhanced performance for multimedia voice and video applications, and other processor-intensive applications that just weren't widely used before. Faculty and staff can do more in less time with their new workstations and upgraded Windows 7 operating system. They now have a modern, high-performing, reliable computing experience."

Maximizing uptime with faster issue resolution

Before upgrading its desktop environment with newer Dell technology, UMUC had a higher than desired number of support requests related to slow processing and other system challenges. "The number of help-desk requests has fallen, and the volume of

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calls related to hardware failures has dropped significantly with our new Dell systems and standardized Windows 7 images," says Butler. "That means we can spend more time supporting the users who really need help, responding more quickly to their requests, minimizing downtime and fostering better relationships between the IT organization and our faculty and staff customers."

The IT team can also spend more time training users on the intricacies of the new applications. "Where we used to spend time addressing hardware issues, our new systems from Dell allow us to extend people's knowledge of their desktop applications and help them increase their productivity," says Butler.

Improving user satisfaction

By increasing application performance and uptime, and dedicating more time to application-level support and training, the UMUC IT team has been able to improve user satisfaction across the university. "Since the migration to new Dell systems and Windows 7, we sent out a questionnaire to gauge end-user satisfaction with their new desktops and the support they've received," says Daniel. "Overall, the feedback has been excellent. The vast majority of staff members are either very satisfied or satisfied with their desktop services. This marks a welcomed improvement over the previous desktop experience. "

Driving efficiency and cost savings through desktop standardization

Before standardizing its desktops with Dell, the IT team was managing a large number of desktop images and didn't know exactly what software was running in its environment. The university now has one standard Windows 7 image with 10 department-specific application profiles, and clear software policies that reduce management complexity and costs. "Because we have standardized our desktop environment from end to end, we can see exactly which apps are running and who is using them," says Daniel. "We have been able to reallocate licenses to those who need them, optimize our software licensing strategy, and achieve cost savings with Dell," says Daniel.

The university has further increased management efficiency with Microsoft System Center 2012 Configuration Manager, which provides a real-time view of desktop performance and automates routine management tasks. "We can now see exactly what is happening across our desktop estate in real time and address issues before they impact faculty and staff," says Butler. "This is one more advantage that Dell helped us implement in our environment to improve our efficiency and maximize application performance and uptime for our users."

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