

University of Central Florida Keeps Pace with Growth, Streamlines Academic Administration with Oracle and Sun

Challenge

Founded in 1963 as an academic pipeline for the Kennedy Space Center, the University of Central Florida has rapidly matured into the nation's third-largest university. More than 56,000 students are now enrolled in its 12 colleges and 225 degree programs, which extend from its 1,415-acre campus in Orlando to 10 regional campuses including Cape Canaveral and Daytona Beach. Furthermore, the university's popularity shows no sign of waning: since 2004, enrollment has risen almost 25 percent.

Keeping pace with that growth is the top priority of UCF's IT administrators, who each year must contend with several critical traffic spikes—the first day of school and final grades among them—when virtually every student (and legions of parents) attempt to logon to the system at once. In addition, UCF must stay far ahead of users' behavior, which has shown a growing preference for Web-enabled portals and self-service options over filling out papers and standing in line.

Solution

To achieve its goal of 100% reliability—and continue building on its successful “online not in line” model—UCF adopted a multifaceted solution combining Oracle software with Sun hardware.

The solution consists of a selection of Oracle's PeopleSoft Enterprise applications running on Oracle Database 11g. An area where the university has seen tremendous growth is Web classes. To handle this growth, UCF has integrated Blackboard, the university's learning management software, with Oracle Database and PeopleSoft Enterprise campus solutions products. Altogether, the solution manages the university's financials, human resources, academic reports, online courses, class assignments, and financial aid.

UCF runs the Oracle solution on a high-efficiency hardware platform consisting of Oracle's Sun Fire X4600 M2 server, Sun SPARC Enterprise M3000, M4000 and M5000 servers, Sun SPARC Enterprise T5220 servers, and Sun StorageTek tape and disk storage systems, which together provide the system reliability, availability, and scalability the university needs to meet peak—and everyday—demands.

Bob Yanckello, UCF's chief technology officer, estimates that recent upgrades of the hardware platform along with server virtualization have reduced data center cooling needs along with the university's power consumption and energy costs, and has allowed central IT to provide additional services to the campus without investing in more server rooms. “Through the use of Sun hardware we have been able ‘spin up’ hundreds of virtualized servers, many running mission critical applications, at a greatly reduced cost to the university,” he says.

To ensure timely access to Oracle expertise, particularly on heavy-volume days, the university relies on Oracle Advanced Customer Services. “Advanced Customer



HEADQUARTERS: **Orlando, Florida**

FOUNDED: **1963**

INDUSTRY: **Higher Education**

STUDENTS: **More than 56,000**

PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

- Oracle Database 11g
- PeopleSoft Enterprise campus solutions
- PeopleSoft Enterprise applications
- Oracle Advanced Customer Services
- Oracle Solaris OS
- Sun Fire X4600 M2 server
- Sun SPARC Enterprise T-Series servers
- Sun SPARC Enterprise M-Series servers

BENEFIT HIGHLIGHTS:

- Achieved reliable access for more than 50,000 students, faculty, and staff during the busiest days of the academic year
- Gave users an array of self-service and Web options that freed them from long lines and cumbersome paperwork
- Substantially reduced the amount of postage and paper for communications
- Managed 25% percent growth over 10 years despite budget decreases and with minimal staffing changes

“The tremendous growth we’ve been able to manage wouldn’t have been possible without the vision of our IT staff and the Oracle and Sun products that helped us realize that vision.”

BOB YANCKELLO
CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER
UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Services gives us expedited response to service requests, top-priority issue resolution, and access to deep technical expertise anytime we need it," says Yanckello. "I can rest easy knowing that Oracle and Sun experts are standing by to help us during peak times."

Results

The combined Oracle and Sun solution has yielded several notable performance and efficiency gains, which over time have created a heavily relied upon, robust and stable system. And thanks to new self-service options, the university has been able to manage swelling administrative tasks without adding any new staff.

"The fact is, the budget doesn't permit us to grow the offices and resources to a level where we can serve people in person," acknowledges Yanckello. "Even if you had the budget, you couldn't hire people fast enough keep up with it. But when you put everything online, you can."

Key benefits include:

- Achieved four consecutive semesters of meeting annual surges in demand that take place on several pivotal days of the year with no outages or downtime
- Automated a broad range of student and employee interactions; generated campus-wide savings by significantly reducing the amount of paper used for letters, forms, and purchase orders
- Gave students, faculty, and staff more freedom and flexibility with instantaneous and personal access to reports on financial aid, human resources, and academic achievement
- Enabled the university to meet the challenges of unprecedented growth by introducing self-service Web options that eliminate administrative logjams
- Improved labor productivity with Sun servers, allowing the university to keep up with growth without hiring additional IT personnel
- Reduced operating costs and energy consumption with efficient, space-saving Sun servers
- Improved overall system performance by up to a factor of 4
- By upgrading old Sun hardware, the university was able to reduce annual maintenance costs by over \$120,000 and improve system performance with faster more efficient hardware

"For UCF, peak times come two or three times a year. It doesn't matter if the system operates the other 50 weeks—we have to have availability when we need it. Oracle and Sun understand this and provide the performance and scalability to handle the most severe spikes."

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