

COMPELLENT SAN EARNS AN A+ IN ROI FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS



Cultivating excellence in the next generation of scholars and leaders is no mean feat. As one of America's 100 Best College Buys® for 11 consecutive years, the University of North Texas (UNT) has distinguished itself by offering outstanding faculty and high academic standards at an affordable cost.

UNT's IT department empowers its 33,000 students with cutting-edge technology initiatives, including podcasts and video lectures. While those efforts have helped to set UNT apart from other universities, rapidly growing storage requirements and an aging existing storage area network (SAN) were limiting IT efficiency and the performance of applications that support students, faculty, and staff.

"Because we didn't make disk purchases until we ran out of space, adding storage to our previous SAN resulted in costly, time-intensive upgrades and downtime," says David Gerlach, computer systems manager for the computer information and technology center at UNT. "We also had limited visibility into how storage was used after it was allocated. As a result, systems performed poorly because they weren't provisioned adequately. Processes that should have taken an hour or two were taking 12 to 24 hours to complete."

Gerlach needed to deploy a new SAN that could meet the IT department's performance, ease-of-management, and cost requirements. In the search for the right solution, Gerlach went through an extensive cost of ownership analysis of the competing vendors. After reviewing the data, Compellent® came out the clear winner.

In the spring of 2007, Gerlach's team chose the Compellent Storage Center™ SAN, implementing nearly 50 TB of Fibre Channel storage in two tiers. "By working with my team to understand our needs, Compellent and our channel partner created an integrated solution that directly addressed our performance and management requirements. In fact, we believe Compellent's Thin Provisioning, Automated Tiered Storage and integrated management features will help us save more than \$2 million dollars over a two-year time span compared to our previous SANs," says Gerlach.



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DAVID GERLACH
Computer Systems Manager
Computer Information and Technology Center
University of North Texas

RESULTS REPORTED BY UNT

- » Projected lower cost of ownership; total savings of \$2 million over two year span
- » Best-in-class performance resulted in up to 5X increase in performance over the previous SAN
- » Automated Tiered Storage helps boost application performance; 50 percent for Oracle
- » Ease of use reduced storage administrators from 6 to 2
- » Thin provisioning expected to increase utilization to 95 percent, improving ROI

OPERATING SYSTEMS

- » Microsoft Windows Server
- » Sun Solaris 9 & 10
- » Linux (Suse, Debian, Red Hat)
- » Microsoft Windows 2003

KEY APPLICATIONS

- » Microsoft Exchange Server
- » Oracle
- » PeopleSoft

EASY TO MANAGE SAN

For Compellent customers, easy to use means being able to manage more storage in less time and accomplish even advanced storage tasks in a few minutes.

For University of North Texas, easy to use meant a pain-free install, proactive support, and allowing administrators to manage more storage in less time.

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THIN PROVISIONING IMPROVES STORAGE UTILIZATION AND ROI

With Compellent, UNT has gained the visibility necessary to cost-effectively meet growing storage requirements. By eliminating allocated but unused storage capacity, Compellent’s Thin Provisioning software, called Dynamic Capacity, is designed to help UNT maximize storage utilization while preventing the unplanned spending that often came with running out of storage space. Dynamic Capacity enables users to create virtual volumes of any size, yet only consumes actual physical capacity as data is created. “Not only can we better use our existing storage, but we can also make better purchase projections because we buy storage only when we need it,” explains Gerlach. “According to our cost analysis, with less than 50 percent utilization historically, we will easily get back over half our storage investments in the future, and expect to be able increase our storage utilization to 95 percent—a huge increase in efficiency.”

Ultimately, the ability to better manage storage at a lower cost helps UNT maintain its reputation for value. “Before Compellent, managing storage was a burden,” says Gerlach. “With Storage Center, my team can quickly and easily manage storage. That means we have much more time to focus on the strategic initiatives that lead the best and brightest to UNT.”

AUTOMATED TIERED STORAGE GIVES UNT BEST-IN-CLASS PERFORMANCE

The Compellent SAN uses multiple approaches to help accelerate access to information. Compellent’s Data Progression™ software automatically moves data at the block level between tiers based on rules established by administrators—without requiring tedious data classification—optimizing the use of high-performance

storage in a tiered environment. Compellent also spreads read/write operations across all disk drives in the SAN so multiple requests are processed in parallel.

“With Compellent, performance improves as more disk space is available, so optimizing how our storage is used had an immediate impact on our most critical applications,” says Gerlach. “Since implementing Data Progression at UNT, we’ve seen a boost in performance by a factor of 5 times for file and print operations, and nearly 50 percent for Oracle applications.”

Those changes are clearly noticeable for faculty, staff, and students. “For our end-users, we’ve tripled the performance of data access over the previous SAN,” says Gerlach. “Students, faculty, and staff can now work faster without worrying that our technology won’t support them.”

EASE OF USE IMPROVES ADMINISTRATOR EFFICIENCY

A single, unified interface spans the entire set of Compellent technologies, capabilities, and configurations, helping Gerlach’s team improve the efficiency of managing storage. “We can set up and provision storage just by pointing and clicking,” says Gerlach. “The Compellent interface enables a single administrator to handle most tasks that require human supervision while automating some of the more repetitive, time-consuming tasks that keep us from other projects.”

Server Instant Replay™ software also helps to simplify administration at UNT by providing a complete, integrated Boot from SAN solution. Using an intuitive wizard, administrators can quickly create boot images and provision new servers. “We were able to reduce our storage administrators from six to two, which means we can refocus our systems managers to complete other IT projects.” says Gerlach.