



TRANSYLVANIA UNIVERSITY
FOUNDED 1780

Transylvania University Leaps Ahead to Next-Generation Collaboration and Virtualization Solution

INDUSTRY

Education

LOCATION

Lexington, Kentucky

KEY CHALLENGES

- Expand from email-only to rich campus-wide collaboration.
- Significantly reduce administration effort.
- Use virtualization to shrink hardware footprint and save on costs.

SOLUTION

Key requirements for the successful platform were an advanced Web experience, robust and easy administration, and support for Microsoft Outlook, Microsoft Active Directory, mobility and the same enterprise-class collaboration features for students, faculty and staff alike without becoming cost-prohibitive. The University chose Zimbra Collaboration Suite for its superior enterprise capabilities paired with VMware ESX server.

BUSINESS BENEFITS

- Lowered total cost of ownership for collaboration software licensing and support by 61%
- Added new capabilities such as high availability (HA) and on-demand access to new virtual servers load-balanced between the physical servers (VMware vSphere® vMotion®)

Zimbra Collaboration Suite and VMware Deliver Lower Total Cost of Ownership, Simplified Deployment and Innovative Features That Raise Student Satisfaction

Founded in 1780, Transylvania University was the sixteenth university in the United States and the first established west of the Appalachian Mountains. "Transy," as it is known by its tight-knit community, is rich in tradition and recognized as one of the top liberal arts colleges in the United States, with 101 U.S. representatives, 50 U.S. senators and 36 governors having called it home over its 230-year history.

The Challenge

Over the last few years, powerful new online communication and collaboration technologies quickly changed how Transylvania University's 1,100 students and 300 faculty and staff preferred to interact on a day-to-day basis. For today's faster-paced environments, these tools offered instant interaction and cut down on inefficiencies seen in email-only communication by adding the ability to search quickly and share files, status and schedules.

These capabilities were not part of the current campus solution, a legacy email platform based on Novell NetMail, which provided users a basic webmail interface and POP email through Microsoft Outlook with limited calendar access. Moreover, the Novell solution was also becoming a major burden for the IT department, because external contractors were required to maintain the aging code base at a significant incremental cost to a modestly sized IT department.

According to Jason Whitaker, director of IT, "We had been on Novell for 15 years; by today's standards there were not a lot of tools available in our deployment." He added, "There was no real way to see mail stuck in the queue, users had to back up their email in PSTs locally instead of from the server, and no one wanted to use the webmail interface."

A break from the current tradition was required to reduce administration effort and provide better collaboration tools to boost campus engagement without incurring additional cost in a time of shrinking budgets.

The Solution

The Transylvania University ("Transy") team conducted an extensive evaluation process, including Microsoft Exchange, Google Apps for Education, Hotmail Live@edu and VMware® Zimbra® Collaboration Suite. In parallel they also investigated virtualization technologies to reduce hardware costs, improve server CPU utilization and streamline maintenance.

Key requirements for the successful platform were an advanced Web experience, robust and easy administration, and support for Microsoft Outlook, Microsoft Active Directory, mobility and the same enterprise-class collaboration features for students, faculty and staff alike without becoming cost-prohibitive. The final choice came down to Microsoft Exchange and Zimbra Collaboration Suite because of their superior enterprise capabilities, with Transy ultimately selecting Zimbra paired with VMware ESX® server for the campus.

VMWARE CASE STUDY

“Zimbra gives us a gorgeous Web interface for students as well as a connector to keep our Outlook users happy and synchronized. Zimbra and VMware have become our two favorite technologies.”

Jason Whitaker
director of IT,
Transylvania University

VMWARE FOOTPRINT

- Zimbra Collaboration Suite on Red Hat Enterprise Linux
- Zimbra Mobile for iPhone
- Zimbra Connector for Microsoft Outlook
- VMware ESX 3.5; VMware vSphere High Availability (HA) and vMotion

PLATFORM

- Two physical servers with SAN

“In the end we did not like Exchange because other schools in our peer group seemed to spend a lot of time ‘managing’ it,” said Whitaker. “We had also used VMware Zimbra Collaboration Suite Open Source Edition™ previously for prospective students’ temporary email accounts, and they loved it.”

Deployment Overview

The new deployment enables multiple campus services to be run on fewer physical servers as virtual machines. Previously, more dedicated hardware offered less capability.

Business Results & Benefits

Zimbra Collaboration Suite was deployed successfully to the entire campus at a 61 percent less total cost of ownership (TCO) for collaboration software licensing and support. The new ESX deployment uses half the physical servers, while the more efficient server utilization runs many more services than before (21 virtual machines) and adds new capabilities such as high availability (HA) and on-demand access to new virtual servers load-balanced between the physical servers (VMware vSphere® vMotion®).

Transy has also found that the new infrastructure requires much less overall administrator time, which can now be spent on other projects. Whitaker added, “Our Zimbra installation has been nearly hands-off in terms of maintenance, and that is good for a small IT staff and school.”

Students and faculty are also enjoying the more powerful capabilities in the new AJAX Web interface, with calendaring and sharing (files, public folders, contacts) beginning to take hold across campus. The faculty has been especially happy with Zimbra on the iPhone, adding a new dimension of efficiency to the always-on-the-go users like the athletic coaches, who work primarily on the field. The Transy IT team is also considering rolling new Zimlet mash-ups to extend the functionality of the Zimbra Web client, including Zimbra Social for Facebook and Twitter management and one-click access to the campus’s Datatel ERP services.

“We came from one of the most basic webmail clients with zero decent server management tools to the best looking Web interface around. . . . I can’t say enough about how Zimbra has changed our management strategies in terms of email and Web,” concluded Whitaker.

