

Customer Spotlight

Sault College

How Sault College created a flexible learning environment and increased student enrolment



SAULT
COLLEGE

Flexible learning is a student-centred method which allows students to work wherever and whenever they want.

It empowers students to become independent and autonomous, meaning they feel more supported in their daily lives. Due to the impact of COVID-19, flexible learning has become the norm at Higher Ed institutions across the globe, however Sault College (SC) already had a hybrid learning strategy in place.

SC has grown dramatically since it was recognized as a College of Applied Arts & Technology in 1967. It currently offers more than 150 programs and diplomas, distance education, professional training, and online and post-secondary courses to more than 4,500 full and part-time students.

The vision of SC is to make their community a better place by providing a transformative life experience through empowering those who study with them, to think and learn in progressive, innovative ways. They have a clear student-centric plan in which they recognize the need to be agile and responsive to opportunities and challenges, while at the same time finding ways to improve efficiencies.

They realised that their traditional method of delivering software wasn't the best solution for their students or their IT department. Even as a smaller college, the IT department had a lot of upkeep on their workload due to the sheer maintenance required for imaging.

“Each program is like trying to run a separate business from an IT perspective. We often have an excess of 20 or 30 of these images that had to be managed and maintained. We couldn't do it as frequently as we would like because we simply didn't have the resources.”

A Crucial Collaboration

Fortunately, SC happens to be a member of the OCCCIO, a collective group of Ontario based colleges who help one and other effectively run information technology support across their institutions.

“In the OCCCIO there are some very large Southern Ontario colleges and us small little northern colleges. But there is no separation when we sit at the table. Everybody works towards common goals, supporting one and other.”

Previously, SC had attended a conference held at Georgian College in which there was a live demonstration and Q&A surrounding AppsAnywhere.

“We liked that AppsAnywhere would allow us to be very agile in our delivery, manage everything in one location, and update as we go without any interruption to the user.”



Digital Toolkit

In SC’s own words once AppsAnywhere was implemented the pieces of the puzzle fell into place. This is rather fitting as AppsAnywhere isn’t the only piece of their puzzle. They created a digital toolkit made up of multiple tools to fit their needs.

“AppsAnywhere is our largest and most important tool, but it is not our only tool in the toolkit. However, as time continues, the product improves! That’s something that I see as a huge benefit as we continue to find reasons to need something different, the AppsAnywhere team find reasons to fit it in there.”

Changes to Campus Life

A great deal has changed since SC implemented AppsAnywhere including the COVID 19 pandemic which hit in 2019. However back when their journey with AppsAnywhere began, remote learning wasn't part of their strategy.

“When we were implementing, we weren't even thinking of the remote stuff. It was more how do we manage this in the classroom. We used to have specialist labs but now 75% of our labs are all general use and we can deliver 75% of our programming in any of those labs.”

Thankfully, due to their digital toolkit SC were able to seemingly switch to remote learning, meaning their students didn't miss out on any of their education.

“We would have never survived in the last year and a half if we didn't have AppsAnywhere. We would have failed miserably during the pandemic to be quite honest. It was just a real-life saver.”



The Experience

This move clearly had an impact on their students, as according to an [article](#) in Soo Today, SC recorded that fall enrolment for the 2021 academic year has jumped by more than 50% when compared to last year. This is an incredible statistic which is relatively unheard of and a credit to the college.

One huge change which has come from student feedback is that SC has changed up their strategy, by looking to move to a majority BYOD environment. They have even repurposed previous campus lab space exclusively for BYOD.

From the IT department's point of view, it meant that as a small college with more limited resources they could achieve so much more.

“Providing software to one student or 1,000 students, makes no difference. With us being a smaller college, we are very resource cognizant, hence why we went with the tool the first place.”



Conclusion

SC's mission is to be recognized as a pre-eminent student-centered institution, with an unyielding dedication to giving students the tools to reach their goals. The fact that they assessed their software delivery before the pandemic, as well as building a unique solution to fit their needs, proves how committed they are.

They may be a smaller college, but they tackled the big problems early on, meaning their students always had the tools they needed. We cannot wait to see what the future has in store for this small college with big ideas.

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