



University of Vermont Customer Spotlight



The University of Vermont

The University of Vermont
has embarked on a digital
transformation to evolve as
the teaching and learning
space of the future.

The University of Vermont, officially The University of Vermont and State Agricultural College, is a public and-grant research university in Burlington, Vermont. With approximately 13,900 students they strive to make work accessible, affirming, and action-oriented to help ensure excellence is inclusive of everyone.

UVM's culture of diversity and acceptance comes from active pursuit of it. With the average undergraduate degree at a public university costing around \$26,290 (according to student support organization College Board), it may seem to many prospective students that attending university in the U.S is unrealistic to achieve or at least a heavy investment into their future.

UVM recognises the importance from both the university and students' perspectives that the education provided and received is at its optimum level of quality. When the pandemic hit in 2020, it made this balance increasingly difficult and forced universities to react momentarily and implement a solid solution to provide remote learning in a brief period. UVM successfully managed to do this thanks to their determination and drive to provide an online solution to their students.



UVM's Overall Digital Strategy

The principle focus for UVM is to make technology accessible as a means to educate their students but also to use the technology to make research and discoveries possible.

To do this UVM has identified three key legs to their digital strategy:

Digital Competency

UVM identified that digital competency for their entire community was paramount going forward. They needed a way for their students, faculty, and staff to become competent with the software without the need for the previously heavily relied upon IT support. For their strategy to work, they created a three-tier support model which comprised of:

1. Self Help
2. Remote Support
3. In-Person Learning

Digital Deferred Maintenance and Why Digital Equity?

When UVM reviewed their digital deferred maintenance strategy they considered their entire ecosystem, which included both the physical and digital maintenance of the campus. This highlighted the need to keep the digital aspect firmly on the institutional roadmap including research computing which continues to grow.

As a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic students and staff were not able to access the physical campuses resulting in more attention required on the digital side.

As UVM went through this transformational shift, it highlighted the importance of digital equity for access to devices, teachers, software and much more to offer technology-powered opportunities to drive classroom learning.



A Silver Bullet...

One of the main drawbacks that UVM faced is that there is not one single application which can deliver software to any device (MAC, Windows, Android & Chrome), anywhere on demand. This is a problem seen regularly in higher education due to the rise of BYOD and the sheer number of applications needed across all faculties.

Instead, the answer is a formula of solutions which enables BYOD and remote learning. In UVM's case, it was the combination of their existing VDI solution and AppsAnywhere.

“One aspect of our digital equity is being able to level the playing field for all.”

Learning Space of The Future

The COVID-19 pandemic forced higher education providers to assess their current technologies and quickly adapt to something that would more suit their student's needs. However, providing access to applications remotely has been something UVM has been striving to achieve for quite some time.

Previously UVM had the very traditional way of delivering software via managed computer labs based on campus or having students contact faculty to get access. With its obvious downfalls, they looked to several solutions including a virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) and a 'home grown' application where students could download software. However, this solution required a lot of work due to issues such as lacking in features and functionality.

“The marriage between the two platforms produced a delightful experience.”

Prior Planning

UVM's commitment to their students via their digital strategy is clearly seen in how they implemented AppsAnywhere so quickly. In fact their entire implementation process was within 30 days. Unlike other institutions they had the forethought ahead of the pandemic to create a virtual learning environment, meaning that AppsAnywhere slotted in nicely with their existing solution.

In addition to this, the idea of this emerging technology was already within the forefront of faculty's minds as part of their overall digital strategy meaning that staff and students alike adapted quickly.

When it came to implementing AppsAnywhere, UVM created a large campaign which included emails through student communications, website updates, advertising on their current portal, and face to face communications with faculty. Staff adapted so positively that many started functioning as if they were salespeople for AppsAnywhere around campus!

In an article from Toggle magazine Dr. Simeon Ananou, CIO at UVM said;

“We pivoted from in person to remote in days,” he adds. “I give a lot of credit to the IT leadership and professionals for their dedication, expertise and knowledge.”

“AppsAnywhere quickly rose to the top of products that did really exactly what we wanted, in terms of providing a modern state of the art software portal. It tied really nicely into our existing VDI environment.”

Putting the Students First

Achieving the perfect student experience does not solely focus on the student, it includes their interaction with faculty and the digital equity provided across the board. Ease of access is crucial and from a student's point of view should be as standard. The student does not need to know how they are accessing the software they require; they just want to click on the desired app (e.g., 'Mathematica') and for it to load straight away.

Previously at UVM, faculty would spend a day or two at the beginning of each semester making sure students had access to the software they required for their course. This included making sure it was installed correctly, and it would run on their hardware. Now, their students and faculty can access any application, on any device anywhere at any time, and in their words;

“The software just works.”

On A Final Note

Implementing any software within 30 days and having your entire campus adapt is a tall order for any organisation, however UVM has shown that it's doable.

UVM is clearly committed to their ever-evolving digital strategy to ensure digital equity to both students and faculty. This is seen in their actions such as regularly speaking directly with students as well as the Student Government Association, Deans, and faculty members for feedback. Moving forward, their perseverance to provide equity of access to technology will continue to keep up with their students' demands.

Their hard work and commitment is remarkable and has certainly resulted in a digital transformation, the future for UVM will continue to evolve and innovate.



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