

Winchester Systems Creates a SAN and NAS Environment Supporting PeopleSoft and Internet Conferencing



Founded in 1929, the Academy of Art University is one of the largest art universities in the country offering BFA and MFA degrees in 12 majors as well as certificate programs. Spread out over more than 25 buildings in the heart of San Francisco, the Academy's mission is to provide aspiring artists and designers with career preparation, combined with academic excellence.

Specific to an art institution, the Academy lives in a graphics, music, and video world and therefore has advanced information technology requirements related to offering a range of Internet courses. The university's use of the Internet also includes integrating conferencing software that allows professors/instructors to create live and interactive online seminar-style "classroom" environments in which students can interact virtually with one another as much as they do with their professors. Since the online discussions are asynchronous (simultaneous participation is not necessary), students can ask questions as they arise and can contribute to discussions at any time.

PeopleSoft Serves Over 7,000 Users

As much as the university is an art school, it also operates like a

medium-sized business serving a population well over 7,000. In this regard, the Academy runs PeopleSoft for all of its administration functions, including its financials such as general ledgers, accounts receivable, student records, financial aid, admissions, and purchasing. Students also are able to pay their tuition on line, check their grades, and review and modify their course schedules.

Instant Response Time Is Critical to Customer Service

Committed to using state-of-the-art facilities and the most technologically advanced equipment available, the Academy prides itself on its uncompromised customer service to its community. According to Bob Lim, Chief Information Officer at the university, "My philosophy is that the staff and students in every department must be able to retrieve information quickly and easily, whether it's related to business functions, such as course planning and student grades, or online coursework."

To this end, the university currently uses a Fibre Channel network for its SAN but finds that it constantly needs more and more bandwidth as the demand for new applications – from making music to making videos – increases. As Lim says, "We need a



robust system to meet our growing and expanding environment; therefore high performance and reliability is crucial to the university."

Searching for a Better Storage Partner

The need to provide its community with the fastest possible response times sent the IS team on a search more than two years ago to find a data storage vendor who could satisfy this requirement. But the team was not only looking for a data storage vendor per se: they were also looking for a partner who could help the department continuously manage its changing, dynamic, and fast-growing technology environment. Lim explains, "We were looking for a business partner who would come in and work with us – proposing solutions that would be cost effective and efficient, while providing superior customer service and excellent technical skills." Although Lim and his IS team had worked with many vendors in the past, they were not impressed

with their responsiveness to the university's needs. The department's search ended when the team became aware of Winchester Systems in 2003 while visiting another school along the California coast that spoke highly of Winchester Systems' data storage solutions.

No Downtime During Installation

After assessing the situation, the engineers at Winchester Systems installed both a FlashDisk FX-600 OpenSAN to run the university's primary database, PeopleSoft, and a FlashNAS file server to accommodate the Academy's voluminous graphics and general business files. Lim and his team were immediately impressed with Winchester Systems



when they learned that the installations would require no downtime, which was in stark contrast to another vendor who said that the university would have to be down for a whole week. Lim and his team were even more impressed with the results and the versatility and range of products that Winchester Systems had to offer. Lim concludes, "What differentiates Winchester Systems from other storage vendors is their

willingness to share with us what works and what doesn't work. Their customer service in terms of their ability and willingness to work within the Academy's guidelines is key. They are our champions. When we need something, they really come through for us."

Moving Forward

The Academy currently has six terabytes of storage and is adding Winchester Systems storage, FlashDisk OpenSAN and FlashNAS, as the need for storage continues to grow. The university is also planning to use direct attached FlashDisk SATA storage to reduce its backup window.

For more information on iSCSI, SAN, NAS and SATA solutions from Winchester Systems go to www.winsys.com

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