



The Voice of New England Innovation

Why schools are hitting the books on cloud computing

By Bob Burke, President, FolderWave Inc.

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Cloud computing is becoming increasingly popular in higher education, normally a slow adopter of new technology. Cloud computing can be used for business continuity planning, or storing archived copies of data off to a cloud storage area - even students' papers and music that can be stored and retrieved whenever they want. This reduces hardware, software, and personnel costs and saves on space, repair, and electricity. It also allows the school to stay current with technology and enables multiple staff to view admissions simultaneously — in or out of the office.

However, the issue of security cannot be overstated in a cloud computing scenario. In reality, security is less about the nuts and bolts of how to protect the data than the idea that administrators must determine who actually owns the data and who has access to it. All this information is being put on these machines out there “somewhere”; thus, the college administrator needs to know who is administering these machines and who has access to them.

It's also advisable to evaluate applications and infrastructure for vulnerabilities and ensure that security controls are in place and operating properly. Setting up an active monitoring program that uses services such as intrusion prevention, access and identity management, and security event log management to identify any security threats to the cloud implementation is a must.

Once these hurdles are cleared, baseline technology questions must be considered. These questions depend on the technology inside the campus or the technology that's necessary to move to the cloud. In terms of the IT organization, this includes the infrastructure vendors they select, the maintenance agreements that they have in place, and technology questions from storage to networking to computing capacity. It is also important to consider if these business applications are being moved off campus, how do they integrate back to campus?

From the business side, there is a big impact on the user community; how big depends on the equipment and systems already in place. There are campuses that are still using green screen terminals off of a mainframe to do their work. In moving to the cloud, these schools are

changing from older PC-based platforms to more up-to-date ones capable of running browser sessions and multiple windows.

What about the legal process when the cloud is brought in? Because the college is placing business-critical data in someone else's hands, contractual obligations about the viability of the system, how often it is updated, how long the data is stored, is the data deleted when it is supposed to be. In essence, when buying software on a campus, it's all about the license agreement; with a cloud vendor, the focus shifts to the service agreement and the protection of privacy, records, and information.

The big payoff for schools is in the comprehensive enrollment management areas where the value proposition for admissions and financial aid can include a major improvement in operational efficiency, enabling a dramatic impact on incoming class demographics and a compelling ROI.

About The President

Bob Burke is president of FolderWave, Inc. (www.folderwave.com), a cloud-based company offering products and services designed to significantly improve complex, high-volume time-dependent process and data management operations in many operational areas in higher education. Bob can be reached at bob@folderwave.com.

