

Western Iowa Tech Community College

Western Iowa Tech Community College Uses Rocket NetCure to Manage Complex Mobile IT Infrastructure in Real Time

Background

Western Iowa Tech Community College, founded in 1966, is a publically supported comprehensive community college serving six Iowa counties, which have a combined population of about 180,000. The college's main campus is in Sioux City on a 200-acre site, and there are two other campuses as well as three learning centers. Each year, some 7,000 full and part-time students attend WITCC, which offers degrees, diplomas and certificates in more than 170 programs.

A well-functioning, complex IT infrastructure requires a world-class dashboard

WITCC prides itself as a school on the forefront of integrating mobile information technology into the education of every student and the work of every faculty member. All of its 200 classrooms are equipped with Apple TV, and every student and instructor has an iPad. To support this, the school has 130 routers and switches, 70 Windows and AIX servers, 4,500 wireless endpoints, 1,500 desktop computers, nearly 400 fixed wireless devices and 10 ESXI hosts on three campuses. Currently, there are 155 wireless access points, and another 45 will be installed in the near future. Keeping a sprawling mobile IT system running smoothly, without racking up costs, is no small task for Mike Logan, WITCC's Dean of Information Technology and CIO.

"It was becoming increasingly challenging to integrate all of the hardware across vendors and applications," Logan said. "This made it harder to isolate problems, analyze the root causes and engage in capacity planning."

Logan went looking for a partner that could enable his team to perform tasks like tracking overall usage of Internet by hour, day and week; discovering which devices and interfaces were using the most bandwidth; and zoning switchloads. Without the ability to track usage, it was hard to guarantee network availability. He says that he also needed to be able to monitor servers and application health in real time, receive email and GUI notifications of problems, balance loads, and optimize port usage.

Industry

Education

Challenge / Situation

In need of a platform that could work system wide—across different vendors, hardware and applications—in order to monitor wireless access points, track usage of thousands of devices, identify potential network problems and address inefficiencies, Western Iowa Tech Community College turned to Rocket NetCure.

Product

Rocket NetCure

At a trade show in Philadelphia, Logan came across the Rocket Software booth, where the company was displaying its Rocket® NetCure dashboard. He says he took one look, and “within minutes” he was sold. “I realized right away that NetCure was exactly what I needed,” Logan says. “On one screen everything is there—all of the data we need to run our system, detect existing and potential problems and optimize capacity—updated in real time.”

NetCure saves WITCC \$120,000 in unused ports and switches

As higher education budgets are getting squeezed, every unnecessary dollar spent takes away from the institution's mission. So for Logan, the show-stopper with NetCure was something he didn't even expect. Soon after the platform was up and running, he ran an analysis of port usage. NetCure found 40 unused port switches and 2,000 idle ports at a cost of \$3,000 each. By shutting down the unused ports, Logan saved some \$120,000 for WITCC.

“This is an amazing result for us, and it only took a few months to achieve,” Logan says. “NetCure is our secret weapon to save money and deliver reliable data to all of our students and educators.” In addition to identifying over-capacity, Logan says that NetCure's reporting capability, such as notifications and connectivity visualizations were invaluable.

“Ironically, when we started looking at NetCure it wasn't to save money, but it was for its reporting capabilities, which we've needed for years,” Logan says. “We now have meaningful one-stop email notifications that contained all of the pertinent information for a specific problem and the emails were also meaningful to non-IT staff and executives.

“And being able to look at a screen that diagrams the connectivity at all layers between specific ports and devices enables us to fix problems a lot faster.”

Vendor-customer partnership is key to high-stakes IT product integration and implementation

If a system is working as it should, people like Logan are the invisible heroes. While some of NetCure's ROIs to WITCC have been more visible than others, the platform has also helped Logan rebalance server loads, find a missing access point and prevent intermittent failures due to out-of-order initialization. And any highly-sophisticated system is only as good as the partnership between vender and customer.

“Usually a vendor is a vendor,” Logan says. “But Rocket is a real partner. It's obvious that they care as much about us as they do their own business. The Rocket team was so helpful and willing to work with us as partners throughout the entire implantation process. They really have no competitors. They think they do, but they don't.”

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Mike Logan
Dean of IT and CIO
WITCC