

Case study

Lone Star College

Growing Texas community college relies on HP computer portfolio



Industry

Higher Education

Objective

Cost-efficiently deliver high-quality technology resources to 98,000 students in 180 programs of study

Approach

Standardize on HP PCs, workstations, tablets, and zero clients

IT matters

- Deploy and manage 17,000 computer devices
- Provide access to thousands of educational applications
- Serve 98,000 students across six campuses
- Run IT as a cost-efficient, value-adding business

Business matters

- Equip students with the same technology they will encounter on the job
- Prepare students for success in academia and the workplace
- Contribute to economic vitality of community
- Meet evolving needs of local employers



“If we are teaching somebody graphic design, GIS, or cybersecurity, we need the best tools to support their success. We chose HP for its reliability, broad portfolio, and continuous innovation.”

– Link Alander, Vice Chancellor of College Services, Lone Star College System



Lone Star College (LSC) is the largest institution of higher education in the Houston area and one of the fastest-growing community colleges in the nation. It provides more than 180 programs of study—from emergency medical services to oil and gas drilling—for 98,000 enrolled students. In each field of study, LSC builds student success by providing the kinds of technology tools graduates will use on the job—from tablet PCs for nursing to high-performance workstations in architectural engineering. To achieve this, LSC relies on the high quality and broad device portfolio of HP.

Energy, healthcare, biomedical research, aerospace: Houston thrives on these industries as well as many others including information technology, construction, and the law. At the center of it all, LSC trains the workforce of tomorrow. Approximately 80% of LSC students earn two-year associate's degrees in preparation for matriculation to four-year colleges. The other 20% represent a growing part of LSC's mission. These are students who plan to enter the workforce directly or who already have jobs but need to advance their skills. They might opt to earn non-credit training certificates, in anything from web development to floral design.

To better serve both academic-track and workforce-oriented students, LSC has started opening Centers of Excellence focusing on specific industries such as petrochemical, oil and gas, or information technology. In high demand today, for example, are IT skills in cybersecurity, mobile-application development, and converged infrastructure.

“Workforce training—which could either be people coming in on their own for Continuing Education or companies sending us employee groups—is a rapidly expanding part of our role,” says Link Alander, vice chancellor of college services at LSC. “To better support the community's changing needs, we're becoming more of a blend of academic and workforce training.” Meanwhile, LSC continues to stand out for affordability as well as quality; its tuition is less than 25% compared to other state institutions.

Equipping students with real-world technologies

As head of LSC's Office of Technology Services (OTS), Alander supports the mission of affordable, high quality education by focusing on optimizing IT performance while reducing costs at LSC's six campuses, 10 instructional centers, and two university centers. In 2008, LSC centralized the IT function so that 96% of the college system's IT spend goes through OTS. That's everything from private cloud computing to classroom video integration.

One challenge OTS faces is the sheer breadth of technology required. LSC is committed to providing students with the real-world tools they will encounter on the job, and given the diversity of its programs that means everything from pharmacy software to computer-aided design applications. Also, the different types of facilities in which the technology is deployed—instructional

classrooms, computer labs, simulation labs, information kiosks—and requirements can grow complex, especially with space and cabling constraints. What's more, LSC employees, including approximately 2,000 full-time faculty, also need computer tools; office workers typically use desktop devices, while faculty and administrators want mobility. The college maintains approximately 17,000 computer devices including PCs, workstations, tablets, zero clients, and thin clients. Each one must suit a particular purpose, and the entire deployment must be reliable, cost-efficient, and easily managed.

That's why LSC relies on HP. In 2008 when OTS centralized, the college set enterprise standards and sought a vendor for PCs and printers. Its selection criteria included device reliability, component stability, suitability to the educational mission, and ongoing innovation. “We run IT like a business here,” Alander says. “We look at our spending in terms of the value added for our strategic priorities.”

Matching each device to its educational purpose

A virtual tour of LSC campuses reveals how the college is taking advantage of the breadth of the HP computer portfolio. In a standard classroom equipped with cable-managed furniture, LSC deploys HP EliteDesk Small Form Factor PCs. If cable-managed furniture is absent, the college uses HP EliteOne All-in-One PCs. To meet the specialized needs of high-end engineering and graphics labs, HP Z Workstations provide powerful access to computer-intensive applications. When students stop at campus kiosks to check in at labs or learning centers, the device deployed is the HP EliteDesk Desktop Mini.

Staff members who need mobile devices, including faculty and administrators, typically request lightweight power; for that, they receive HP EliteBook Notebook PCs or HP Pro x2 Tablets. LSC complements all of its devices as needed with HP monitors and optional accessories such as docking stations. HP Partner NWN Corp. provides asset tagging and imaging services, enters the BIOS settings, and pre-checks every device to ensure it arrives in tiptop condition. LSC is an HP Self-Maintainer, and employs certified technicians to maintain its devices. Simplifying this task are HP reliability and the stability of HP device configurations. “When we did the bakeoff, other vendors couldn't guarantee the consistency of components during the model's lifecycle. If you start changing critical

Customer at a glance

Application

Deliver diverse technology resources for 98,000 students pursuing 180 fields of academic and workforce education

Hardware

- HP EliteDesk Small Form Factor PC
- HP EliteDesk Desktop Mini
- HP EliteOne All-in-One PC
- HP Z Workstation
- HP EliteBook Notebook PC
- HP Pro x2 Tablet
- HP Zero Client Desktop
- HP Elite Slice Desktop

HP services

- HP Self Maintainer

components, it messes up our images and we have to adapt each time. The consistency HP delivers was a core requirement for us." LSC standardizes on Intel® processors with the vPro™ chip set enabling remote management in conjunction with Microsoft® System Center Configuration Manager (SCCM).

Virtual desktops bring additional agility

Recently, LSC has started growing its virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) and now has approximately 2,600 HP Zero Client Desktops deployed. VDI offers a number of advantages. One is that with no moving parts, the zero clients stand to last longer. LSC refreshes its laptop PCs every 3.5 years and its desktop PCs every five years, but anticipates that zero clients might last as long as eight years.

“The classroom hour is sacred. You don’t get to do it again. We want to make sure we have the best device in the best condition, ready to go.”

– Butch Juleg, Associate Vice Chancellor of Technology Services, Lone Star College System

An even greater benefit is agility. Even with the educational industry moving toward Web-based applications, LSC must provide hundreds, if not thousands, of applications either resident on devices or from the data center via VDI. Most classroom labs use a standard software package, but on occasion a particular class needs something special. It’s much easier to deploy that application via VDI than to upgrade every PC used by the class. In addition, it’s easier to move a class from one lab to another as needed. “Zeros help us be a lot more agile,” says Butch Juleg, associate vice chancellor of technology services. “We can change the virtual machine to match the new classes going in during registration, and quickly add the math or English software they need right away.”

LSC also has started testing HP Elite Slice Desktops, cable-less, modular Windows® 10 devices designed as communication hubs for collaboration. “The Elite Slices are small and they boot up very quickly,” Alander says. “We think they’ll be a good fit in classrooms that have only a single PC, for instructors to manage audiovisual equipment.”

An ongoing advantage of LSC’s HP relationship is an early view of the evolving education-solution roadmap, and since HP partners with Intel the college can see the collaborative advances of each innovation leader. “We want to stay on top of what’s next in the market space,” Alander says. “We needed a vendor that would support us with the latest technologies as we moved ourselves forward to stay relevant. HP has met those needs every time.”

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