

Georgetown University connects the community on campus and beyond using Google for Education tools



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

What they wanted to do

- Modernize their technology to enable collaboration and agility
- Connect faculty, students, staff, and alumni on a single platform
- Improve access to information from any device, anytime

What they did

- Adopted Google Apps for Education to provide easy, effective email, storage, and collaboration
- Migrated 20,000 users to Google accounts over 90 days
- Extended Google accounts to all alumni for life

What they accomplished

- Freed up IT resources for more strategic work
- Saved \$120,000 per year on licensing costs alone by retiring email servers, filtering software, and disparate mail systems
- Allowed students and professors to work together anytime, anywhere



Background

Founded in 1789, Georgetown University is the oldest Catholic institute of higher learning in the United States. Today, its 17,357 students, in addition to 2,234 faculty, represent diverse backgrounds, faiths and cultures. Georgetown lives up to its motto of *"Ultraque Unum"* (both into one) by encouraging its students to become leaders in the service of others – in Washington, D.C., and beyond.

Challenge

While remaining rooted in its rich traditions, Georgetown experimented in the redesign of the classroom to the quad for the Georgetown of 2030. However, the University faced a roadblock when it came to IT. Georgetown's previous IT system was fragmented and needed upgrades. Students, faculty and staff were often held back by technology, rather than enabled by it.

People across the university used multiple tools for their calendars, email, and file storage, hindering efforts to work together, schedule meetings, and share information. Many of these tools were also outdated, expensive and difficult to use. For instance, the 12-year-old email system only allowed 250MB of storage per account, and students and professors frequently hit their limits. Spam filtering was expensive, with costs escalating every year. The university needed a single solution that could help foster collaboration instead of hinder it.

Solution

The University Information Services (UIS) department began a comprehensive transformation of technology at Georgetown in 2009. One of the first projects was to pull all of Georgetown's disparate mail, calendar, file sharing and collaboration systems together into a unified suite by moving to the cloud. They found that no on-premise solution could match Google Apps for Education in collaborative features, storage capacity, ease of use, or cost-effectiveness. By transitioning everyone to Google Apps, Georgetown could unify its community and encourage collaboration between students, alumni, faculty and staff.

Students at Georgetown began using Google Apps for Education in 2009 and instantly noticed dramatic benefits. In the summer of 2012, Georgetown decided to complete their migration by moving all 20,000 students, staff and faculty members to Google.

"It's more traditional in higher-ed to have a very drawn out, two-year migration process. We did it in a much more accelerated timeframe of just 90 days," says Beth Ann Bergsmark, associate VP of UIS and former Georgetown adjunct faculty. "You want people to be able to work together, use chats and hangouts, collaborate on calendars," Bergsmark adds. "And if you've got a really long migration path, you just split up your community."

UIS hosted training sessions, and formed a faculty working group to openly communicate about the move. About 30% of Georgetown's staff and faculty already had personal Google Apps accounts, but UIS found that even people without prior exposure were excited to migrate.

"We used to spend all of our resources making sure things were running, and we didn't have time to work on providing better features. Now things just run!"

—Marty Johnson, director of enterprise services, identity and collaboration

"Google is reshaping the IT workforce. It's simplified our architecture, it's connected our community, and it's given us a way to achieve the things that we really want to do."

—Beth Ann Bergsmark, associate VP of UIS and former Georgetown adjunct faculty

Google Drive for limitless learning

Google Apps for Education played a critical role in moving Georgetown toward the goal of their technology transformation—creating a connected learning and working environment—spanning the classroom, library, dorm, or office. With Google Drive, files and information are at busy students' fingertips. They can attend virtual office hours on Google Hangouts and work on group projects entirely through Google Drive.

The Corp, Georgetown's student-run corporation and the largest student-run nonprofit, uses Google Drive and Sheets to coordinate schedules that can be updated on the fly. They use Google Forms and Docs on any device whenever they need to edit, comment, share files, and plan events without meeting in person.

Arnie Miles, Computer Science adjunct faculty at Georgetown, runs his class on Drive. "At the beginning of the semester, each student shares a Google Drive folder with their TA. All student work is saved directly to that folder, which is subsequently synced to the cloud and to the TA's desktop. Work is then submitted and evaluated via Drive," Miles says.

Benefits

Effectiveness

In the last few years, the UIS has become a business partner to academic departments.

Savings

Standardizing on a single platform simplified Georgetown's IT system and saved the school \$120,000 per year on licensing costs. Going Google has even allowed Georgetown to switch off its in-house email servers and take a giant leap forward in the services provided to employees and students.

Lifelong learning

Google Apps for Education has allowed Georgetown to deliver on the promise of "once a Hoya, always a Hoya" by extending Google accounts to all alumni for life. When students graduate, they keep their email addresses, calendars, and all files stored in Google Drive. "Connecting the lifecycle of student, alumni, and lifelong learner is important," Bergsmark says.

Georgetown has come a long way in its technology modernization journey and looks forward to continuing to innovate.

