

Lehman College

Powering Messaging Services for Higher Education

“NOTHING IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN KEEPING THE SYSTEM UP AND ALWAYS AVAILABLE. THE MIRAPOINT SYSTEM DOESN'T GO DOWN. IT'S EXTREMELY RELIABLE AND WORRY FREE. IT WORKS. IT JUST WORKS.”

Jerry Barnard, Manager of User, Media, and Program Support Services, Lehman College

CASE STUDY | EDUCATION



BUSINESS NEED

Reliable, fully featured solution that is easy to administer

SOLUTION

Mirapoint Message Server
Mirapoint RazorGate

BOTTOM LINE

Mirapoint delivers a highly reliable end to end message network based on appliances that simplifies email management

Background

Lehman College is a public, comprehensive, coeducational liberal arts college founded in 1931 as the Bronx campus of Hunter College. It was established as an independent college of the City University of New York (CUNY) system in 1968 and renamed for Herbert Lehman, Governor of New York. Its picturesque campus was the site of the first meeting of the United Nations Security Council in 1946. With about 10,000 students, 300 faculty, and 800 staff, it is the only four-year public college in the Bronx. Email has become an essential communications medium among Lehman's students, faculty, and staff.

The Business Need

The first Lehman College email system was a home-grown project deployed in 1986 on a Digital VAX 11/750 running VMS. Subsequently in 1989 the college switched to using open-source software on a Digital Equipment Corporation AlphaServer running Digital UNIX. By 2004, it was supporting 20,000 email accounts—well beyond its intended capacity. “It was about ready to break down and we had to find another solution quickly,” says Jerry Barnard, manager of User, Media, and Program Support Services at Lehman College.

Around this same point in time, CUNY was considering a system-wide initiative to provide email to all 19 campuses via a centralized Oracle Collaboration Suite solution. Because CUNY already licensed other Oracle software, the Collaboration Suite was bundled in as part of the license. With little time to pursue alternatives, Lehman agreed to deploy the Oracle solution in August 2004, which was also implemented at one other CUNY campus at the same time.

From the beginning, Lehman experienced difficulties and frustration with the system. “It was a nightmare,” says Barnard. “The system would totally crash, or one aspect of it would fail. We would get lots of application errors. Users couldn't get into the system. The Oracle application was spread across 15 servers. When users called in to complain we would ask them, which box are you on? Is there an error number in the corner? Keep trying until you get a different box number.”



Lehman College

The Lehman team worked with the technical staff at CUNY Central and at Oracle to resolve the problems. “CUNY Central had a staff of between five and ten people working on it almost constantly, getting no where-not to mention numerous people at Oracle,” says Barnard. “We never had 30 consecutive days of stability. This went on until the day we removed the system 11 months later.”

The Mirapoint Solution

After six months of attempting to resolve a litany of issues with the Oracle Collaboration Suite application, Lehman lost hope that it would ever live up to expectations. “No matter how much money or people we threw at this supposedly free product, it wasn't going to work,” says Barnard.

Lehman's technical staff began investigating alternatives. “We did our homework, looked at what was out there, read the Gartner reports, and talked to other schools that were using Microsoft Exchange, Lotus Notes, and Mirapoint,” says Barnard. “We determined that Mirapoint was the best solution available. It was an appliance, which meant less staff work for us. We didn't have to build the system.”

Lehman College was anxious to replace the Oracle application, but it was already June 2005, and making the change during registration or after the fall semester began was not an option. Deployment had to be completed no later than July—a schedule all agreed was aggressive. “We scheduled it for July 28,” recalls Barnard. “We shut down the old system, turned on the new system, and were running in less than an hour. Over the next 36 hours we transferred almost all the folders.”

Lehman chose to employ Mirapoint Professional Services to perform the installation and cutover for several reasons. First, the College had limited technical resources, second, they wanted to focus those resources on database tasks associated with the migration, and third, with the persistent problems associated with the Oracle system, they wanted to take every precaution to ensure a fast, trouble-free deployment.

The Bottom Line

The Mirapoint solution has single handedly met the expectations of Lehman College. Unlike its unstable predecessor, the reliable Mirapoint solution has never been down. And it is delivering a wide

range of features that never materialized on the Oracle system, such as calendaring and address books. Web access has been especially helpful for remote users. “I got phone calls from professors in Europe saying this is fantastic, thank you,” says Barnard.

The ease of use and stability has earned respect and rave reviews from students, faculty, and staff. “The ongoing problems with the Oracle system drove many of our users to seek alternatives, like Yahoo, Hotmail, and AOL,” says Barnard. But those users are coming back. Email traffic has increased dramatically since migrating to the Mirapoint solution.

Mirapoint has also simplified management. Unlike the Oracle Collaboration Suite, the Mirapoint solution, which supports just under 30,000 email accounts, is now a part-time task for just one administrator, but the key has been reliability. According to Joe Middleton, Director of Information Technology Resources at Lehman College, “It's been very dependable, which has freed us from spending a lot of time troubleshooting. We like that.” Barnard agrees. “Nothing is more important than keeping the system up and always available. The Mirapoint system doesn't go down. It's extremely reliable and worry free. It works. It just works.”

About Mirapoint

Mirapoint® is the market leader in appliance-based solutions for secure message networks in enterprise, service provider, and education organizations, with more than 100 million mailboxes served and secured worldwide. Customers use Mirapoint appliances including the Message Server mail appliance and RazorGate mail security appliance to build the messaging infrastructure that intelligently serves, secures and manages email. Mirapoint is headquartered in Sunnyvale, California, with offices throughout North America, Europe and Asia. For more information on Mirapoint, visit its Website at www.mirapoint.com.

Configuration

- One Mirapoint Message Server M4500
- One Mirapoint RazorGate RG450