

Simplified Storage with On-demand Scale

Saint Michael's College, located just outside of Burlington Vermont, is a selective college for the study of liberal arts and sciences. Most of the college's IT resources directly support the needs of 3,200 staff members and students, so Saint Michael's IT requires storage infrastructure that just works. Their existing system of storage, disaster recovery and backup was getting so complex and difficult to manage that additional outsourced help was required just to support it. Data had grown to the point where backup could not be completed in a day. With The Nasuni Service, Saint Michael's addressed its storage infrastructure challenge with a single solution that combines storage, backup and DR with unlimited scalability that can be easily managed by one person.

Drivers

- Backup could not be completed in one day
- Exponential data growth
- Existing systems were too complex and costly

Requirements

- Re-architect storage and backup with a system that just works and requires minimal management
- Cost-effective scalability
- Take advantage of cloud technologies becoming mainstream
- Excellent technical support

Nasuni Solution

- One consolidated system for file storage, backup and disaster recovery
- Unlimited cloud-based scalability
- Easy-to-use central management console
- Minimal management required



Saint Michael's is a selective Catholic college of approximately 2,000 students studying the liberal arts and sciences on a scenic 440-acre campus just outside of Burlington, Vermont. Founded by the Society of Saint Edmund in 1904, the guiding principles of education, justice, and service to the poor are at the heart of the Saint Michael's experience.

The Department of Information Technology is committed to creating a robust technology environment for the students, faculty and staff of Saint Michael's College. They support the mission and goals of the College by providing tools and services for campus constituents: a reliable, secure and fast campus network; support for the appropriate integration of technology into teaching and research; and the technology support for administrative operations of the College. The department supports more than 2,000 students and a total user population of 3,200+ in 50 buildings on campus.



Data Growth and Complexity

Several years ago, Saint Michael's IT implemented a second data center with Active/Passive Failover for disaster recovery. The result was two of everything – storage, servers, backup, etc. – creating a complex and costly system. In addition, over the last five years, data had grown exponentially. With 12TB of primary data, backup and restore had become increasingly problematic. Backups couldn't complete in the one weekend day allocated and backup quality was a concern. File restores required escalation from the help desk and were laborious – users would not get back their files for hours or even days. Retention was limited because media had to be rotated so if users requested an older file, it was not possible to restore it. This was not ideal for a department committed to excellent and timely user support.

“Our previous backup system was relatively complex and had a lot of moving parts to it - we weren’t comfortable with the quality of backups we were getting and it was becoming increasingly difficult to manage. We needed a system that was more streamlined, stable and reliable.”

— Shawn Umansky - Network Engineer

In addition, with data continuing to grow, IT had to turn away requests from other departments due to storage constraints, address the project in the next refresh cycle, or add resources outside of the normal cycle. For example, the Art Department wanted students to have art portfolios online so professors could see students’ work right on the network. Without this capability, students purchased hard drives and physically handed them to the professor, which is cumbersome to say the least. This is the kind of request that would have been put on hold prior to the implementation of Nasuni.

The Nasuni Solution

The Nasuni Service provides file storage, backup and disaster recovery in one easy-to-use integrated system. Nasuni Filers cache active data locally providing fast access to files for all users. The master copy of all data is maintained in the cloud for unlimited scalability. Snapshots are taken frequently and stored in the cloud as well with no limits to the amount of history that can be retained. File backups of 12TB are a thing of the past and snapshot-based restores are easy and fast with the Nasuni Management Console (NMC). File restore requests can be handled immediately by the helpdesk with just a couple of clicks.

The Nasuni Service is very cost effective. With only a small portion of the 12TB of data in active use, Nasuni Filers are sized accordingly. This saves a great deal of money over the previous system that required two copies of all of the data provisioned across two data centers. With Nasuni, data redundancy is maintained in the cloud and restoring file access after a disaster simply requires bringing up a new Nasuni Filer and pointing it at the cloud storage.

With NMC, management is vastly simplified. For example, Saint Michael’s IT provides storage for home directories for the entire population of students and staff. NMC makes it easy to set quotas on this storage. A simple quota rule can be applied at the root and propagated down to all directories with a single click.



Why Saint Michael’s College Chose Nasuni

Nasuni met the requirements with an all-inclusive system that provides file sharing, backup, disaster recovery and even integrated anti-virus protection. In fact, during migration to The Nasuni Service, infected files were found that had gone undiscovered by the existing antivirus product.

Nasuni also provides unlimited scalability. If more space is required for an unanticipated project Nasuni can provision it immediately in the cloud.

“I’ve done a lot of phone support over the years with different manufacturers and I would say that Nasuni support is above and beyond them all.”

— Shawn Umansky, Network Engineer

For Saint Michael’s College, The Nasuni Service just works. The easy to use Nasuni Management Console makes for a system that requires minimal ongoing management. When there is an issue, Nasuni Technical Support provides support that is “above and beyond all other vendors” according to Shawn Umansky, Network Engineer at Saint Michael’s. IT spent a great deal of time researching options to replace their SAN. Nasuni provided the features, scalability, simplicity and support that Saint Michael’s College required.