



Muhlenberg College Differentiates Itself by Providing Superior IT Support through ISS Solutions



SNAPSHOT

Company: Muhlenberg College
Headquarters: Allentown, PA
Business: Highly selective, private, liberal arts college

OVERVIEW

Challenge:
Provide superior computer support to improve student and staff productivity and performance.

Solution:

Contract with a service-oriented and technically-competent firm to assist in same-day hardware repair and to reduce data loss to approaching zero.

Benefits:

- Reduced IT emergencies to events through quick, expert response
- Obtained immediate parts replacement and repair for over 60 file servers, multiple models of student laptops, and printers
- Tapped into a pool of technicians with strong communications and technical skills

Muhlenberg College attracts over 4400 applications for a freshman class of 580.— The college admits fewer than half of its applicants, putting it in the “highly selective” category for admissions. Muhlenberg College is well known for a strong sense of community and connection among students and faculty. The college has emphasized service, including service in the information technology area. This may be one of the competitive differentiators that enables Muhlenberg College to recruit many high-quality students.

Muhlenberg College Director of the Office of Information Technology Harry Miller says, “The level of service we provide is atypical from what other similar institutions provide.” For example, Muhlenberg College offers students on-site support for their personal computers. When a student can’t locate the files for his or her term paper, or when a student’s screen suddenly goes blank, trained technicians are available on-campus to remedy these problems. A full-time ISS Solutions technician is part of Muhlenberg College’s hardware repair team.

ISS Solutions also provides Muhlenberg College with server repair within four hours, assistance in hardware purchasing, new operating system implementation, personal computer implementation, and IT staffing to fill in for employees on leave.

Reduced IT emergencies to events



“Although emergencies happen on a routine basis,” says Mr. Miller “the quality of interplay between ISS Solutions and our staff reduces them from emergencies to events. We coordinate and respond, so there really aren’t emergencies.”

Muhlenberg College monitors every server, switch, and node in a 23-city block area, every second of the day. Events are reported to the Network Manager and Mr. Miller immediately. Depending on the event, an ISS Solutions technician may be called on-site to effect immediate repair. Other times, the on-site ISS Solutions technician may be asked to respond to an issue upon arrival at 8:00 a.m., before the college opens.

Once in a while, problems do occur that require significant technical expertise. For example, one day, the monitoring system indicated that there was a problem with a drive. After technicians replaced the drive, the monitoring system still indicated that something was wrong with the drive. ISS

Solutions called in additional technical expertise and the team rebuilt the server from scratch, an operation that took only a few hours. ISS Solutions technicians called their contacts at the original manufacturer for assistance and mailed the damaged drives to them for testing and examination.

Mr. Miller comments, "Certainly, ISS Solutions was on the ground with its expertise. With ISS Solutions' assistance, we decided what to do, and the problem was solved as quickly as possible. We were able to communicate and work well together."

Obtained immediate parts replacement and repair

Muhlenberg College strives to repair student laptops quickly. Mr. Miller says, "We probably stock more spares than most sites because we want to do the repairs that same day."

Students bring their own laptops to college, so parts must be sourced from many manufacturers, including Apple, Dell, Gateway, HP, IBM, and Lenovo. ISS Solutions provides students and staff with both warranty and non-warranty repair services. ISS Solutions also provides 24 x 7, four-hour repair services for over 60 file servers and repairs the college's laser printers.

ISS Solutions has set up an on-site inventory of the most commonly needed and critical parts for desktops, laptops, servers, and printers. Technicians can obtain additional parts at ISS Solutions' headquarters or through ISS Solutions' extensive vendor network.

By collaborating with ISS Solutions, Muhlenberg College does not need to establish relationships with multiple parts vendors and manufacturers. ISS Solutions orders the right parts for inventory and the right parts for imminent repairs.

"If you repair hardware issues in the same day in the majority of cases, then productivity is significantly improved. If you reduce the loss of data to approaching zero, then you significantly improve performance. Our collaboration with ISS Solutions enables us to do this day after day."



— Harry Miller, Muhlenberg College, Director, Office of Information Technology

Tapped into a pool of skilled technicians



Before Muhlenberg began working with ISS Solutions, it was difficult to manage parts inventory, it was time-consuming to handle warranty paperwork, and it was frustrating when their in-house technician was absent to attend training or to take personal time. When this employee left the college, Muhlenberg College decided to outsource IT services.

"We wanted a firm that knew the business and that could provide redundancy in the position. We didn't want to hear that a computer can't be fixed because the technician is out sick," recalls Mr. Miller. Every few years, Muhlenberg bids out the contract. However, Mr. Miller says, "We have not seen another company that will provide the same flexibility and technical expertise at our current cost."

During the ten-year period that ISS Solutions has been serving Muhlenberg College, ISS Solutions has augmented the on-site technicians with additional experts. For example, Muhlenberg needed a temporary technician when an employee was on extended leave. Through ISS Solutions, the college can bring in additional resources to assist with special projects, such as a laptop refresh.

"ISS Solutions has always presented us with good people," says Mr. Miller. Muhlenberg College looks first and foremost at a candidate's communications and teamwork skills. Secondly, they review the candidate's technical skills. "ISS Solutions provides technicians that are flexible and willing to perform whatever services we might need on campus."