# University of Northern Iowa

Sun Success Story.

## Creating a Campus-wide Information System with Sun™ and Oracle

The University of Northern Iowa (UNI) chose Sun servers and storage as the foundation stones for the crucial first phase of its ambitious campus-wide information systems upgrade. Choosing Sun allowed UNI to ensure future compatibility while also gaining a state-of-the-art enterprise system that was easy to install and came in on time and under budget.

One of the top Midwest universities with a student enrollment of over 14,000, UNI's long-term computing vision is based around a technological architecture that integrates information across the entire system, allowing students, faculty and administrators to access vital services and data at the touch of a button. Located in Cedar Falls, IA, UNI has five colleges that offer a variety of graduate programs and more than 120 undergraduate majors to students from 46 states and 57 countries. Leveraging the power of Sun, UNI has embarked on a better way of servicing the administrative needs of its faculty, staff, and students.

Implementing this vision involves converting from a 1970's technology and command-line interface that has been updated through the years, to a 21st century hardware/software combination and Web browser interface that are the most advanced available today and that allow for self-service by students, administrators, and faculty.

The first step was a project the University named MEMFIS—Modern Executive and Management Financial Information System—and involved replacing homegrown applications running on an IBM mainframe that ran the university's human resources and financial system. This complicated system of upgrades and workarounds was replaced by a sleek and powerful combination of Sun servers running an Oracle 8i database with 11i applications that created a system custom-tuned to meet UNI's current and future needs.

"We decided three years ago to replace the financial information system, human resources and payroll, and we chose Sun for the hardware and Oracle for the software," says Dennis Lindner, the university's Information Systems director. "We wanted one integrated application and one common platform. It was very important that we choose software and hardware from leading vendors because we are looking at a long-term solution and we want to be certain it's a long-term relationship."

**Institution**
University of Northern Iowa

**Industry/Market**
Higher Education

**Hardware/Software**
- Two Sun Enterprise™ 450 servers
- Two Sun Enterprise 4500 servers
- Two Sun Enterprise 420R servers
- Eight Sun D1000 storage arrays
- Sun Ray™ appliances
- Solaris™ Operating Environment
- Oracle 11i
- Veritas file system, volume management, netbackup

**Key Goals**
- Replace HR and financial information system as first step to campus-wide information system upgrade
- Integrate applications on a common platform offering peak reliability and performance
- Ensure future compatibility and scalability by opting for open source
- Install system that could be managed by university staff
- Work with leading vendors to establish long-term relationship

The decision made UNI one of the first institutions to run Oracle 11i Applications on Sun enterprise class machines and the experience passed all expectations. “We had high performance and reliability expectations from Sun, but they surpassed everything. We implemented phase 1 in July 2001—and we are very proud that we have had no downtime in the first seven months,” Lindner says.

This impressive feat is no surprise to Oracle. “Sun was selected due to the fact that Oracle develops on Sun hardware and both companies are strong advocates of open systems that work with third-party software,” says Dr. Chuck Volin, the Oracle sales manager on the project. “Most other companies are much more proprietary.”

“Sun has been a very reliable and cost-effective platform upon which we plan to build future applications.”

**Garry Bozylinsky**,
Associate Vice President for Information Technology,
University of Northern Iowa

“Open source and flexibility is very important to us,” Lindner stresses. “As we purchase other applications we need to communicate cross platform and cross application. Sun allows us to do that.”

Dan Merry, President of Open Technologies, the campus agent that implemented the UNI project, identified the use of the Sun Oracle Application Technology Center (SOATC) as a key component of the project’s success. Run by Sun and Oracle engineers, SOATC allows companies to input detailed information about their system needs and recommends a system architecture designed to meet those needs as efficiently as possible.

“It’s been marvelous, a great asset,” Merry said. “The whole system was planned out in advance. We went from the start of planning to full implementation in a year, and with no surprises.”

Sun made sure that UNI got the right system for the right price and has been responsive to UNI’s every need, Lindner explains. The simplicity of the Sun architecture also made it easy for the university to train its own staff to run the system, resulting in large savings in time and money.

The benefits were enhanced even further by an array of Sun Ray™ thin client appliances that were distributed around the campus to provide easy and convenient information access on a 24/7 basis.

“Our experience with the Sun Rays is very positive,” Lindner says. “They simplify desktop management since we never have to deal with the desktop. We can manage everything from the server.”

“For the first phase we were on time and within budget—and with these ERP projects that is quite unusual,” Lindner says. “We felt that the cost of the hardware was good and that Sun provided a number of options on how to meet immediate needs and grow to future needs. Whenever we needed help they were very responsive.”

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