



Serving students faster

Situation

Lee College is not your typical institution of higher learning. This two-year community college, nestled in the upper gulf coast of Baytown, Texas, is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award Associate of Arts Degree, Associate of Science Degree and the Associate of Applied Science Degree. Lee College is also accredited by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Texas Education Agency. In the heart of industrial Houston, Lee College's non-traditional students often arrive to register for classes after working eight to 12 hour days still wearing their steel-toe boots. These students are focused on one goal and that is to get through the registration process quickly.

Wanting to serve its students in a more timely fashion, Lee College realized that the limited processing power of its Compaq commodity servers delayed its registration process, which resulted in students having to wait in line, sometimes up to three hours, to register for class or calculate tuition payments—many times with children in tow.



Challenge

Implement a robust infrastructure that can support the latest release of PeopleSoft as well as provide students with a more time-efficient registration process.

Solution

Unisys Components

Unisys ES7000 enterprise servers

Microsoft Components

Microsoft Windows Server 2003 Enterprise Edition

Microsoft SQL Server 2000 Enterprise Edition

Peoplesoft Components

PeopleSoft 8.0

PeopleSoft Consulting Services

PeopleSoft Installation Services

Benefits

- ▶ Consolidation of eight commodity servers and 18 processors into two ES7000 servers eliminated the use of a distributed environment.
- ▶ Registration process for students is almost 10 times faster.
- ▶ Generation of state-mandated reports now takes three hours instead of three days.

Platform Highlights

As a result of a major PeopleSoft application upgrade, Lee College was faced with two options: increase its distributed server farm running PeopleSoft by over 70 percent and its processor count from 18 to 48 or pursue a consolidated approach. With the help of Unisys, Lee College implemented two 16-processor Unisys ES7000 servers running Microsoft Windows Server 2003 Enterprise Edition and Microsoft SQL Server 2000. This solution successfully supports PeopleSoft 8.0 and requires only two servers and 32 processors and four blade servers for Web infrastructure management—a much more attractive option.

The college faced another challenge that needed immediate attention. With the latest version of PeopleSoft about to be released Lee College needed a more robust, reliable system. In order to support its existing PeopleSoft environment, the college required more processing power than the eight Compaq commodity servers it had in place could deliver.

Not satisfied with the proposals presented by competitors Dell and HP/Compaq, Lee College IT executives visited the Unisys Web site and filled out a request for proposal (RFP). Shortly afterward, Unisys consulting expertise was put to the test.

Solution

At the Unisys Center of Excellence at PeopleSoft headquarters in Pleasanton, California, Unisys put together a configuration for Lee College. The result? Together Unisys and PeopleSoft consultants presented the Unisys ES7000 enterprise server solution as the ideal infrastructure to support the new release of PeopleSoft 8.0. The IT staff at Lee College agreed that it was the right solution—one that met their budget and staffing requirements to boot.

“The partnership between Unisys and PeopleSoft was evident,” says Dr. Carloyn Lightfoot, Director of Information Technology and Chief Information Officer. “They worked together to provide us with the best solution possible.”

Through this solution Lee College consolidated its existing eight commodity servers and 18 processors into just two 16-processor Unisys ES7000 servers running Microsoft Windows Server 2003 Enterprise Edition and Microsoft SQL Server 2000 Enterprise Edition. One server is an active/passive cluster running the Microsoft Windows Server 2003 Enterprise Edition and Microsoft SQL Server 2000 while the other server is divided into two 8-way partitions running PeopleSoft 8.0 and the college’s student information system. Thanks to its new consolidated environment Lee College has the option of scaling up with minimal maintenance. In addition, the college avoided having to manage 19 servers and 48 processors.



“We were impressed with the cluster management aspect of the ES7000 server,” says Dr. Lightfoot. “The Compaq commodity servers we previously had did not have the processing power we needed. We couldn’t administer all partitions from one central location. Through consolidation with the ES7000 server, we now have tight integration between the partitions.”

Lee College IT executives saw the Microsoft Windows Server 2003 Enterprise Edition not only as the most stable and capable operating system, but also the most compatible with PeopleSoft. They were equally impressed with Microsoft SQL Server 2000, which readily supports the college’s 200 concurrent users. This is critical during peak times such as registration for each semester when system usage significantly increases.

“The ES7000 server running Microsoft Windows Server 2003 Enterprise Edition and Microsoft SQL Server 2000 offers Lee College the ability to support PeopleSoft 8.0 on a secure platform,” says Dr. Lightfoot.

Benefits

Lee College has realized several benefits, one of which is better serving its students, as a result of its ES7000 server implementation. For example, students were used to waiting for long periods of time when needing to calculate tuition payments. It would typically take each student about 10 minutes to complete a tuition calculation, which made for extremely long lines. Sometimes students would have to wait up to three hours. Now instead of taking 10 minutes for each student to get their tuition calculations they get a response almost instantaneously.

“The students love the real-time responses they receive,” explains Dr. Lightfoot. “For example, withdrawing from a class before the implementation of the ES7000, was very complicated. Now, it’s quick and simple. Many of our students are parents and come straight from work to class. Time spent at school is time spent away from their families, so it is very important to us that we serve them as quickly as possible.”

Dr. Lightfoot adds, "The processing power of the ES7000 server was quite clear when we had our first registration since implementation. The registrar staff was able to devote more time assisting students with the registration process instead of listening to students complain about the time it takes to register."

Lee College IT programmers are also enjoying the benefits of the new ES7000 server-based solution and the new enhancements provided with PeopleSoft 8.0. Federal mandated reports, such as the 1098-T Tax Report, that the college is mandated to run normally took three days to generate. The ES7000 server can handle the job in three hours—leaving programmers free to focus on other college initiatives.

"We are very pleased with the service we received from Unisys," says Dr. Lightfoot. "The Unisys team understood our needs and helped us meet them in a timely fashion. Whenever we have a question or concern, someone from Unisys always has an answer."



Looking forward

"Unisys and the ES7000 server have provided us a strong, reliable foundation, which we can build upon in the future," says Dr. Lightfoot. In the future Lee College hopes to work with Unisys to implement a Storage Area Network (SAN) solution in addition to its existing EMC CX400 disk. According to Dr. Lightfoot, the strategic initiative to implement a SAN will not only provide more storage space for the college's PeopleSoft applications, but for other applications as well, which will ultimately enable the college to see a significant return on investment.

Visit Lee College at:
<http://www.lee.edu>

For more information about PeopleSoft products, go to:
<http://www.peoplesoft.com>

Learn more about the Unisys ES7000 family of servers at:
<http://www.unisys.com/es7000>



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