



Laying a Foundation for Growth

*Move from On-Premise to the Cloud Accelerates
the Transition to a Next-Generation Learning Experience*

Overview

The adoption of cloud-based applications and services is changing not only the way educational institutions configure their software and file storage—it's also changing the way they think about those functions altogether. In a cloud-based world, it doesn't matter how the work arrived in the cloud. What matters is that information is accessible from any location and from any device. Cloud-based technologies offer significant cost savings for educational institutions while also allowing them to speed adoption of new and advanced technologies.

Rose State College, a longtime D2L client, recently embarked on a transition to a cloud-based strategy that would allow the school to accelerate its learning goals. Assisted by the Brightspace Professional Services team, the college made the move from a traditional on-premise implementation of the Brightspace platform to the managed cloud service—driving down total cost of ownership while providing Rose State's Learning Resources Center with accelerated access to the platform's analytics functionality.

AT A GLANCE

Client	Rose State College
Students	4,700 FTE
Level	Post-secondary
Services	Advisory and consulting, implementation, and cloud services
Solution	Brightspace Online and Blended Learning solution

CHALLENGE

- Lay a solid foundation for expansion and growth of the school's learning platform

SOLUTION

- Advisory and consulting services to help define and establish learning outcomes
- Implementation services for data migration
- Managed cloud services and support package

RESULT¹

- Cost-competitive host pricing, avoiding additional infrastructure cost outlay
- Complete migration from on-premise to managed cloud service in just five weeks with no major problems
- Foundation laid for transition from learning environment to fully integrated platform



Challenge

EXPAND TO DELIVER AN INTEGRATED EXPERIENCE

With approximately 8,000 active users and access to Brightspace offered in conjunction with every course delivered on campus today (1500 courses per semester during the fall and spring, and 500 in the summer), Rose State College is easily considered a power user of the Brightspace platform.

The use of Brightspace is varied across the campus. Professors use the platform for a range of classroom activities, such as publishing a course syllabus and calendar or distributing handouts, presentations, links, audio, and video to students online. Students also turn to Brightspace to participate in courses delivered exclusively online, communicate with instructors and fellow students beyond the walls of the classroom, and to submit their assignments electronically. Rose State College has even used the Brightspace platform to conduct Student Senate elections and surveys.

Despite these successes, Chris Meyer—Dean of Rose State College’s Learning Resource Center—understood that there was significantly more value to be explored within Brightspace.

“We have been with D2L for several years. Recently, we carefully made an exhaustive comparison of Brightspace tools with other platforms. We made a very deliberate decision to stay with the Brightspace platform as its functionality best fits our existing and future pedagogical needs,” says Meyer. “However, to date, our use of Brightspace has been limited to a very small set of platform features.

By using core features more fully and upgrading to a fully integrated platform experience including Brightspace Insights™, we can grow and evolve our teaching and learning experience.”

Meyer elaborates, “We actually began looking at analytics three years ago and investigated standalone solutions for reporting, thinking that was the way to go. What we found is that not only are these solutions quite pricey, they only provide a database solution for metrics tracking. We would still need to input all the underlying data. It just didn’t make sense to decouple analytics and reporting from the solution driving the day-to-day learning within the classroom.”

The Rose State College team also wanted to move forward quickly and cost-effectively with their plans for a learning platform.

“Our Brightspace implementation had always been self-hosted, supported, and serviced by a local technology services provider. However, to scale up and implement the Brightspace Advanced Analytics solution, as well as a student information system (SIS) integration, we would have had to nearly double our current infrastructure investment, investing in new hardware, bandwidth, file storage, services, and so on. We’d also be just one of a number of clients in our service provider’s project queue, so we were looking at an implementation timeline that would be months, if not years, away.”



SERVICES AND SUPPORT TO DRIVE A LONG-TERM PLATFORM GROWTH

After assessing both the costs and timeframe involved, it became apparent to Meyer and his team that their existing self-hosted business model could no longer support the educational institution's growth needs. Rose State College required a partner that could provide the services and support needed to ensure a capacity for long-term growth.

The decision to move forward with managed cloud services was driven by three key factors. First, Rose State College determined that D2L itself was best equipped to help Rose State implement the analytics and integrations it required to achieve its growth strategy. Second, D2L provided a more economic advantage: D2L's host pricing was very competitive—on par with the existing vendor—and Rose State would not be required to foot the bill for additional infrastructure. Third, by eliminating a vendor from the mix, Rose State would greatly simplify its service and support model, paving the way for future issues to be resolved more quickly and efficiently.

MOVING FROM “YES” TO “DONE” IN MERE WEEKS

The change in service, when executed, needed to go unnoticed by Rose State College's Brightspace user population. It also needed to happen fast—very fast. “We knew for some time that we wanted to make the move and the D2L team was advised of our plans, but we couldn't action the team until we had budget approval. So we were only able to sign the contract to proceed with the project in early July. In addition, we needed to conduct the changeover during a time when our system load was at its lightest.

That meant our team and the Brightspace Professional Services team had only about five weeks to go from a “yes, let's move ahead with the project” to “we need the project done and the solution fully deployed,” explains Meyer.

Travis Hurst, Coordinator of Instructional Technology and Brightspace Administrator at Rose State College, met with the D2L team to frame out the implementation process, respective responsibilities, project milestones, and checkpoints. Given the narrow timeframe, it was critical that the D2L team and Rose State's existing host were coordinated and ready to transition the two terabytes' worth of files over to D2L.

The work truly began when the files were received. “Part of the reason we worked within this narrow timeframe was to minimize the difference between the files and data on our existing on-premise and the managed cloud service,” explains Hurst. “During this August period, we had only about a dozen interim courses running, each with twenty to twenty-five students. After files were copied over, the D2L team then needed to examine the existing server to determine which files had changed over that period of time (as a result of student and course activity) and transfer the necessary files over to the new system as well. If the project were to be delayed even by a little bit, faculty would be returning from summer break and coming into the Brightspace system changing their courses. And, shortly after that, we'd have students coming into the system preparing for the fall term. The volume of change at that point would be much greater and increase with each day's delay.”



FULL PLATFORM FUNCTIONALITY, AVAILABLE ON-DEMAND

The transition from on-premise to D2L hosting went very smoothly, with no significant repercussions or major issues reported.

With all of the Brightspace functionality now available on demand, the opportunity that lies ahead for Rose State College is to tap into the Advanced Analytics solution to better understand critical information—including which courses are being accessed through Brightspace, for what purpose, and how many of the school’s “active” 8,000 students are truly active. Reporting up until this point has been completely manual, so Meyer and the Learning Resources Center are looking forward to being able to generate trustworthy, accurate metrics on student performance.

ANALYTICS TIED TO LEARNING OUTCOMES AND STUDENT ACTIVITY IS THE GOAL

The Brightspace Advanced Analytics solution will ultimately be aligned with learning outcomes for each course, and across programs, so that Rose State can begin truly assessing how well a student has mastered the entire body of knowledge presented in a particular program. “We realized that instead of spending additional money on an extra database to maintain, we could put the money into a learning platform that we already use, tie in learning outcomes, and use analytics to harvest key metrics,” says Meyer.

Dr. Dana Lindon-Burgett, Director of Instructional Support & Online Learning at Rose State College, is now working with the advisory and consulting services team, to define and establish learning outcomes for Rose State courses and programs and attach them to course-based activities. Lindon-Burgett and her team are also working with Rose State College’s Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and College deans to establish common terminology and language to be leveraged in writing learning objectives so that there is consistency right out of the gate.

“We’re going to start small to ensure we get it right, but we’re so excited by the opportunity that lies ahead,” says Meyer. “In the first semester and first year, we’ll focus on ten or twelve courses and do them very well. Then, build on that early success to drive the approach college-wide, based on priority of programs.”

About D2L

D2L is the software leader that makes the learning experience better. The company's cloud-based platform—Brightspace—is not a common one-size-fits-all learning management system (LMS). It's easier to use, more flexible, and smart. With Brightspace, you can personalize the experience for every learner to deliver real results. The company is also a world leader in learning analytics: its platform predicts learner performance so that you can take action in real time to keep them on track. Brightspace is used by learners in higher education, K-12, and the enterprise sector, including the Fortune 1000. D2L has operations in the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, Brazil, and Singapore. | www.brightspace.com

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