



Zimbra Brings Innovative Email, Calendaring and Collaboration Technology to the Universiti Malaysia Perlis Campus

The Universiti Malaysia Perlis is an institution of higher learning located at the northernmost part of the Malaysian peninsula. As a relatively new and modern institution, the Universiti of Malaysia (UniMAP) specializes in technology and engineering studies and has rapidly grown to over 7,500 students, faculty and staff across many campuses. UniMAP prides itself on developing entrepreneurship skills among its students.

INDUSTRY

Education

LOCATION

Perlis, Malaysia

KEY CHALLENGES

- Deliver rich collaboration to a diverse range of desktops in remote locations.
- Significantly reduce administrative costs and effort.
- Provide an open platform with integration capabilities.

SOLUTION

Zimbra Collaboration Suite was able to offer the advanced user experience UniMAP's students, faculty and staff required and scaled well across the multiple campus locations.

BUSINESS BENEFITS

- Improved student productivity with the campus wide calendaring system.
- Increased mobility with access to the system using devices such as BlackBerry and iPhone.

The Challenge

Founded in 2001, UniMAP grew rapidly from just 116 engineering students to 6,000 today. Over the past several years UniMAP had been using Sun iPlanet for its directory service, email and calendaring but needed a solution with extensive Web 2.0 collaboration features that could more easily scale and be deployed across its 20 different locations and large population. They evaluated an upgrade to Sun iPlanet as well as Lotus Mail, but neither offered a best-of-breed Web experience; strong calendaring platform; and compatibility with the users' diverse range of desktop systems, email clients and Web browsers all in one package. Features such as document sharing, integration of mail and calendar with mobile systems, built-in spam and virus control, and scalable email architecture had become necessities for this rapidly growing user base. The new platform also needed to be compatible with UniMAP's directory service, which would not be retired, as well as have open programming interfaces to enable customization and easy integration with the campus IT infrastructure.

The Solution

The team at UniMAP ultimately selected VMware® Zimbra® Collaboration Suite to meet its collaboration needs because Zimbra Collaboration Suite was able to offer the advanced user experience UniMAP's students, faculty and staff required and scaled well across the multiple campus locations. The

Zimbra open-source platform was also one of the key differentiators as compared to other solutions. UniMAP implements several other open-source technologies, including an open-source network management system, Red Hat Linux and Ubuntu Linux operating systems. Furthermore, the ability of Zimbra to work well with their existing lightweight directory access protocol (LDAP) allowed for a very smooth migration from the previous iPlanet system. As an added benefit, the appearance of Zimbra was familiar to the students, faculty and staff, which allowed for a painless transition. According to Nasrudin Abd Shukor, director ICT Center at the Universiti Malaysia Perlis, "Zimbra is familiar for anyone who has used Microsoft Outlook, but with many added features and open-source technology." Nasrudin went on to say, "UniMAP also anticipated significant cost savings by implementing Zimbra as compared to our previous system, as is evidenced when comparing the cost of licensing per user."

Business Results & Benefits

Since the implementation of Zimbra Collaboration Suite, students, faculty and staff have seen many benefits, including increased efficiency and organization as a result of the campuswide calendaring system. Academic departments at UniMAP use the Zimbra calendar to post projects, assignments and notes, which keeps everyone informed despite being spread out over 20 different campus locations. Staff members also use the calendar to do departmental planning by forming groups and to-do lists to keep track of what has been accomplished.

VMWARE CASE STUDY

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Nasrudin Abd Shukor
director ICT Center,
Universiti Malaysia Perlis

VMWARE FOOTPRINT

- Zimbra Collaboration Suite on Red Hat Enterprise Linux
- Zimbra Web Client
- Zimbra Mobile for iPhone and BlackBerry serving 20 geographically remote locations

PLATFORM

- IBM Blade Server HS22 for three mail transfer agents (MTAs)
- Sun fire x4170 for Mailstore
- IBM System Storage SAN24 SAN Switch
- Cisco MDS 9216 SAN Switch
- IBM System Storage DS4700 and DS3400
- Barracuda as external MTA

The Universiti has modified Zimbra to match UniMAP's branding, so the look and feel are those of a fully customized solution built specifically for UniMAP and make students feel they are part of a larger community. Additionally, UniMAP faculty and staff are taking advantage of the extensive Zimbra mobile features by accessing the system using mobile devices, including the BlackBerry and iPhone. "I believe that Zimbra is the leader in next-generation collaboration software and trust that it will continue to evolve as UniMAP grows as an institution because of Zimbra's openness and flexibility," said Nasrudin Abd Shukor.

Nasrudin and a team of IT administrators are also in the process of testing several Zimlets and plan on implementing them soon for added benefits. They are also in the planning stages of connecting Zimbra to campus systems, including the student, human resources and financial information systems; the library; and e-kedatangan. UniMAP is in the process of training systems administrators in order to reap the benefits of these additional promising features.

As of Q1 2010, the campus was in the process of upgrading to the recently launched Zimbra Collaboration Suite 6.0 and was looking forward to rolling out new features, including the briefcase functionality for sharing and accessing documents and files.

Nasrudin, who has been in education IT for 20 years, had used a variety of communication systems and said all fell short of providing all the features of Zimbra. He added, "All the Universiti of Malaysia Perlis, from the vice chancellor to the dean, administrative staff to the students, are fond of Zimbra and the added collaboration it has brought to the campus. We look forward to implementing additional features in the future."

