



Case Study: California State University System Tracks Network Using Planet IRM

With 23 campuses, 417,000 students, and 46,000 faculty and staff, the California State University (CSU) system is the largest, the most diverse, and one of the most affordable university systems in the country. The system has won national acclaim for turning out qualified, savvy graduates to fill important jobs in industries ranging from high-technology to entertainment to agriculture to tourism that drive the state's \$1.6 trillion economy.

To serve the campuses' growing IT demands, the CSU has undertaken an ambitious endeavor to upgrade its entire network infrastructure. To achieve this, the Technology Infrastructure Initiative is equipping campuses with miles of new cabling, voice over IP capabilities, voice over Ethernet services, wireless connections, distributed fault monitoring systems, WAN access support services, identity and access management functions, network security systems, and a wide array of other benefits.

As the state embarked on this omnibus technology initiative, the campuses had no cohesive way to track the details of all the extensive network wiring. "We had no drawings to rely on – just spreadsheets and notes," said Charlotte Ferguson, CSU Systems Analyst/NIAMS Project Lead.

The university system decided to remedy this situation with the installation of a new critical infrastructure management tool from Planet Associates. The software, Planet® IRM, allows network architects at each campus to visualize, analyze and manage all aspects of the campus's critical infrastructure. The tool not only allows more accurate assessment of technologies needed for various installations; it is designed to help the university system rebuild more easily should it ever

face damage to a facility in the future.

With Planet, the university system can visualize the entire system design. "Our engineers can color code aspects of the system – they can trace cabling routes from faceplate to patch panel to termination point," Ferguson said. "When a problem arises, we can pinpoint it quickly by identifying the trace routes, before sending engineers out on site to analyze the situation. We expect the return on our investment will be measurable based on the amount of time we save during the discovery process."

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"If we need to replace fiber optics, for example, we can easily tell how many linear feet is required," Ferguson said. "When it comes time to rebuild after a system disruption or if someone inadvertently cuts a line, we know instantly what it will take to get the campus back up and running. This is an important part of our business continuity plan."

As of mid-2007, the state had installed Planet IRM on 11 campuses: in Dominguez Hills, San Luis Obispo, Los Angeles, Monterey Bay, San Jose, Pomona, San Marcos, Northridge, Chico, East Bay and the Chancellor's Office area in Long Beach. More rollouts are planned.



The California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo was the first in the CSU system to fully implement Planet IRM. Over the years, the university's infrastructure had grown significantly. The campus had extensive cabling for phone and data communications, but had no easy way to view the overall infrastructure. "We needed a way to track and manage all of these connections in one central location for better resource planning," said Benny Kurashima, Technical Services Coordinator.

The university needed an application that would track all of the connections and service delivery pathways, integrate the existing CAD drawings, manage spares, reduce the number of support calls, and add and remove circuits without affecting connectivity. To eliminate time-consuming troubleshooting, the university decided to bite the bullet and conduct a complete inventory of the network. As the inventory is performed, data is entered into Planet IRM.

"It's great to have one application that lets us document and manage our premise, campus and WAN infrastructures," Kurashima said. Planet IRM's MAC module has helped the university improve efficiency to make moves, additions and changes (MACs) with its simple point-and-click interface. The ability to provision changes ensures minimal confusion and mistakes when work orders are generated. Planet IRM also maintains a

full audit trail for the process, which is important when reviewing workloads and performance.

Finding the physical path of a circuit and locating its passive components are typically the most time-consuming parts of troubleshooting a problem or performing MACs. Planet IRM's visualization capabilities significantly reduce this "discovery" time by providing a highlighted physical circuit path with an explorer view of all the details for each passive component. The technician can instantly retrieve cross-connect numbers, pair identifiers, equipment location, and port information from Planet IRM, no matter where the equipment is located.

Before deploying Planet IRM, "it was a real challenge to collect all the data we needed to track the network cabling," Kurashima said. "Today, we have a much better picture of what's out there. For example, if a staff member wants connectivity in a particular area, we can quickly advise them which live port they can connect to."

"I see Planet IRM playing an important role in planning for future network investments," Kurashima said. "For example, as we rebuild copper cabling, we can document bad pairs to forecast when cables will need to be replaced, and to glean a better understanding of future capacity needs."

*About Planet Associates Inc.
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