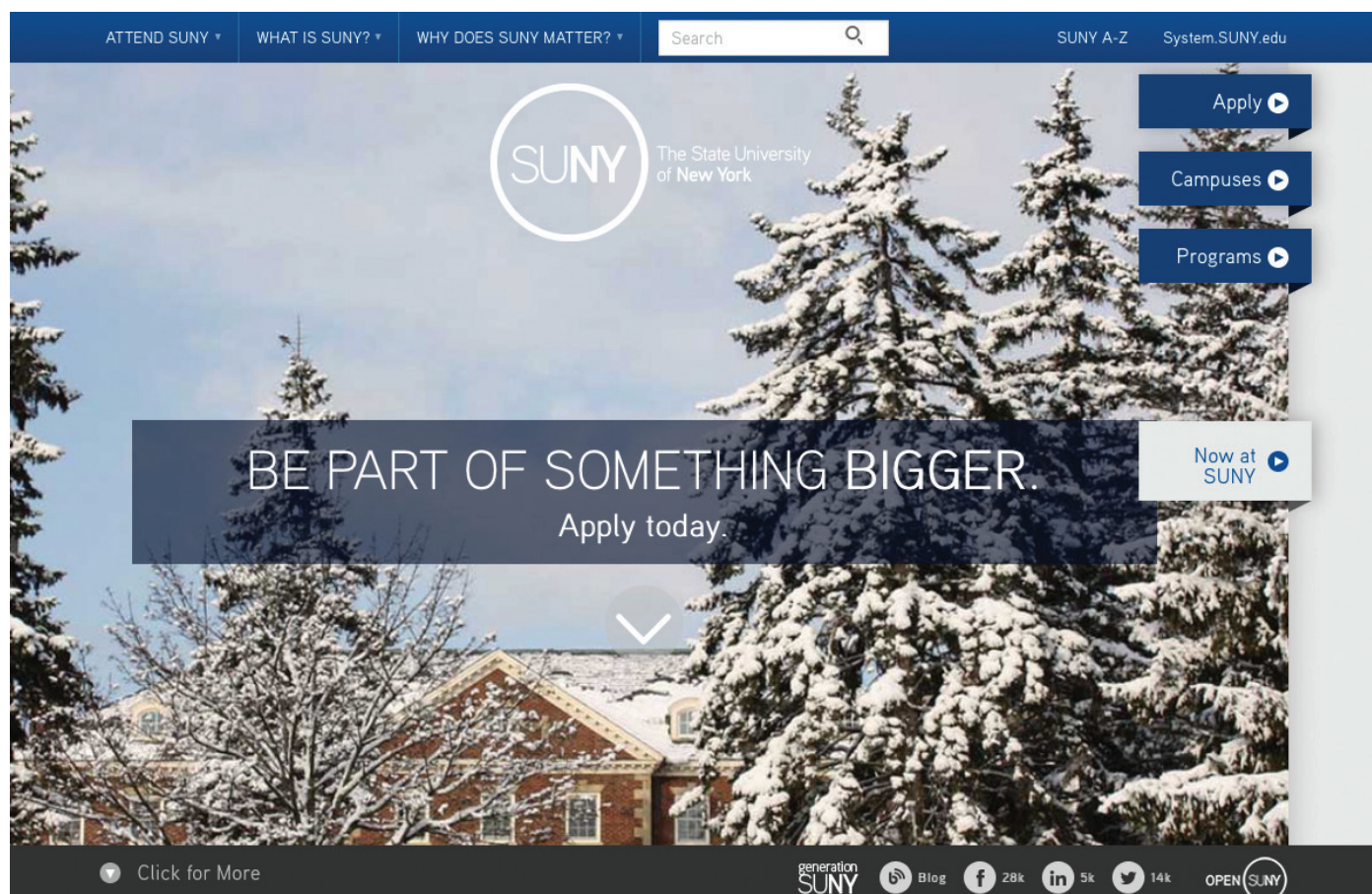# Stony Brook's IT Department Cuts Costs, Grows Web Presence with Acquia

Flexible CMS and Multi-site Hosting Approach Helps SUNY's Stony Brook University Serve 47,000+ Students and Staff

Stony Brook University, part of the State University of New York (SUNY) system, serves nearly 25,000 undergraduate and graduate students annually. Every day, thousands of students and faculty turn to the University's Division of Information Technology to provide them with access to the tools and services they need to learn, study, and work. Unfortunately, the IT department's web presence—with out-of-date content and cumbersome navigation—didn't work well for end users or content creators. Wanting a flexible yet stable solution that could be quickly implemented, Stony Brook's IT team turned to Acquia.

acquia.com

The Challenge

SharePoint, the IT department's previous web platform, was causing no shortage of headaches among staff.

"Cross browser problems were rampant. Site tweaks and updates were completely backlogged. Navigation and search issues were popping up regularly, and our content was a mess—from duplicate content, to content that was outdated, incomplete, or just plain inaccurate," said Rich von Rauchhaupt, web strategist and architect at Stony Brook. "We began a search for a content management system (CMS) that would alleviate the issues plaguing us."

The CMS selection committee evaluated Drupal alongside seven other CMS solutions, including DotNetNuke, Adobe CQ5, and Sitecore.

"We needed something that would be multi-tenant capable and extendable with a built-in content approval workflow and the ability to have unlimited contributors and editors," explained von Rauchhaupt. "We narrowed it down to Drupal and DotNetNuke, and then added criteria related to support, community, and costs/licensing. Drupal emerged as the clear winner."

The Solution

With Drupal chosen as the CMS, the team's next decision was where to host—locally or in the cloud?

"At the time, our Systems and Operations team did not want to take on the additional responsibility of managing a Drupal environment with their limited manpower," said Kerrin Perniciaro, manager of IT communications and web strategy at Stony Brook. "Luckily, the acting CIO was willing to let us try Acquia Cloud Developer as a low-risk initiative to see how the cloud would work for us," she said.

The IT Department then began a 4-month transition from its current site and local host to Drupal and the cloud. "The majority of the transition time was spent on updating existing content," Perniciaro explained. As the launch date grew nearer, the IT team decided to upgrade to Acquia Cloud Professional to take advantage of its enhanced support and client advisory services.

The Results

Upon rolling out the new site, the IT team saw an immediate increase in pageviews and received positive feedback from their 40+ content editors and scores of end users. Across campus, other departments noticed the IT Department's success. Interest in Drupal and cloud hosting grew.

> *"[With Acquia Cloud Enterprise]... we are able to take on extremely large sites with unique code and hardware requirements, as well as offer space to smaller sites with limited budgets—thanks to the shared and managed multi-site environment. It's the best of both worlds."*
>
> — Rich von Rauchhaupt, Web Strategist and Architect, Stony Brook University

Stony Brook University

→ State University of New York (SUNY)

→ www.suny.edu

→ 25,000+ undergraduate and graduate students

→ 47,000+ students and faculty

"Other departments took notice of our successful site launch," noted Perniciaro, "and many were having success with Drupal on their own, but didn't want to be in the hosting business. To support that success, we decided to explore enterprise-level Drupal hosting solutions like Acquia Cloud Enterprise to prepare for potential growth."

Over the next two years, the IT team continued to expand their knowledge of Drupal and the Acquia Platform to the point that they felt comfortable offering Drupal as an official University service. The service has now expanded to host more than 20 sites across 7 unique site installations.

"We have found Acquia Cloud Enterprise to be a versatile platform that allows us and our clients a great deal of flexibility," said von Rauchhaupt. "We are able to take on extremely large sites with unique code and hardware requirements, as well as offer space to smaller sites with limited budgets—thanks to the shared and managed multi-site environment. It's the best of both worlds."

"We feel much more confident with Acquia hosting our sites, from a security and risk standpoint. We don't have to worry about making updates to the operating system, applying security patches, and other necessary but tedious tasks. We've had no unplanned outages since moving to Acquia Cloud," von Rauchhaupt continued. "We've received a lot of positive feedback. Our content editors are happier, our site visits are way up, and we're collaborating across the University."

According to Perniciaro, the department is deciding whether an internal business plan is needed to make Drupal and Acquia Cloud Enterprise a managed (charge-back) service that the team can make available to other departments across the University.

"Within the IT department, we plan to migrate another 15 to 20 static sites over to the Drupal platform. We will continue to evaluate and fine-tune our processes and procedures as we move forward," Perniciaro said.

"At the time, our Systems and Operations team did not want to take on the additional responsibility of managing a Drupal environment with their limited manpower."

— Kerrin Perniciaro, Manager of IT Communications and Web Strategy, Stony Brook University

Let's talk

acquia.com | 888.922.7842 | 1.781.238.8600

ACQUIA® THINK AHEAD