Cutting-edge technology helps students succeed

Academy of Art University uses high-performing, reliable workstations, servers, and PCs to help design students get ready for the workforce

"With Dell, we have consistent technology across the Academy, and we can help our students to advance by giving them the current and powerful technology they need to prepare for joining the labor force."

Kevin Eves, Director of Finance, Systems, and Analysis, Academy of Art University

Customer profile

ACADEMY of ART UNIVERSITY
FOUNDED IN SAN FRANCISCO 1929 BY ARTISTS FOR ARTISTS

Company	Academy of Art University
Industry	Higher Education
Country	United States
Employees	2,550
Website	www.academyart.edu

Challenge

Academy of Art University needed reliable, high-performing hardware to support its cross-academy technology innovation strategy.

Solution

The Academy is using Dell™ PowerEdge servers, Dell Precision Workstations and Dell OptiPlex desktops across all the school's functions.

Benefits

- The Academy can support its strategy of providing innovative, cutting-edge technologies
- Academy provides students with access to high-performing computers and benefits from Dell support
- University can better support remote learning

Solutions featured

- Desktop Computing
- Mobile Computing
- Server

Founded in 1929, Academy of Art University is the largest art and design school in the United States. The university offers degrees and certificate programs both on-campus and online to more than 18,000 students around the world. Students enrolled in the university can earn Bachelors and Masters degrees in more than 20 academic and professional disciplines.

"I work with many different kinds of technologies and I'm on a lot of technical support calls. Of all those vendors, Dell ProSupport provides the best response, hands down."

Chris Becker, Lab Supervisor, Academy of Art University

The Academy is committed to being a cutting-edge learning institution that gives students the opportunity to develop skills to succeed in a competitive job market. "The professional art and design world is witnessing a revolution in technology, and this is an incredible opportunity for students to launch their careers and be part of the 21st century workforce. Our ability to provide a unique educational experience to these aspiring artists and designers hinges on our integration in the classroom of the best technology available," says Dr. Elisa Stephens, President of the Academy. To support this commitment at a broad level, the University has a cross-academy strategy that seeks to give all departments, including faculty and administrative staff, technology that fosters innovation. "We want to prepare students for jobs in the emerging innovation economy, and we need to use the best technology in all areas of the university to make that happen," says Kevin Eves, the Academy's Director of Finance, Systems, and Analysis.

In the classroom, the Academy strives to honor this commitment by providing students with high-performing, state-of-the-art computers. "In our Architecture Department, it's not uncommon for students in a lab to render a design with up to 10 million polygons," says Chris Becker, a lab supervisor at the Academy. "We need powerful desktop computers to support that."

The Academy must also ensure stability and reliability of its classroom computers, because students need to work on design projects around the clock. "Our students share computers, and we promise a certain amount of lab usage per student," says Doron Serban, the Architecture department's undergraduate emerging technologies coordinator. "So if even one computer goes down, that's a certain number of student hours on that computer that I've promised but can't fill. Downtime is just not an option."

The Academy uses the latest Dell servers and workstations throughout the organization

Starting in 2004, the Academy began using Dell™ hardware in several of its departments. Currently, the university uses dozens of Dell PowerEdge R910 and PowerEdge R820 servers to power its on-site and online campuses. The school also uses more than 1,200 Dell Precision

Technology at work

Services
Dell™ ProSupport

Hardware
Dell Latitude 10 tablet
Dell Latitude laptops
Dell OptiPlex 980, 990, and 9010 desktops
Dell PowerEdge R910 and R820 servers
Dell Precision R7610 rack workstations
Dell Precision T7600, T7500, T3500 tower workstations
Dell XPS laptops
Dell XPS Ultrabooks

T7600, T7500 and T3500 workstations in studio and lab settings in the Architecture, Animation, Fashion, Interior Architecture, Industrial Design, Game Design, and Landscape Architecture departments. The Dell Precision workstations are used to teach classes including Introduction to 2D Media (using Adobe, AutoCAD and Rhino); Producing Physical Models (using Grasshopper and 3Ds Max); Introduction to 3D Media (using Rhino and 3Ds Max); and 3Ds Max - Digital Morphology. The workstations also power a range of other technologies that directly support 3D printers, laser cutters, CNC machines and an industrial robot arm. The tower workstations are also made available to students outside of instruction hours, with labs and studios open until midnight or 2:00 AM each day and on weekends.

Given the range of curriculum supported by these workstations, the range of software used on campus is extensive and the demands for performance are considerable. "Dell provides reliable, high-performance equipment, reducing the occurrence of downtime," says Eves. "Dell also provides effective support service, resolving downtime when it occurs."

The Academy also employs Dell OptiPlex desktop computers to support administrative staff, as well as Dell Latitude and XPS laptops. Looking ahead, XPS Ultrabooks and the Dell Latitude 10 tablet are being evaluated to support the demands of mobility for faculty and administration. "We want to provide more flexible interaction with students while retaining access to critical enterprise systems, something campuses and enterprises are finding difficult to deliver on other tablet devices," says Eves. The academic lab team is also piloting the use of Dell Precision R7610 rack workstations, which provide secure remote access through zero-client or other compatible devices. The Academy hopes to use this virtualized workstation solution to enable students to securely access their files and take advantage of the solution's compute power and rendering software while offsite.

The Academy can support its technology strategy and prepare students for success

The University can easily support its cross-Academy strategy of offering students state-of-the-art technology by standardizing on Dell servers, desktops and workstations. "Dell is our strategic IT partner, and across the Academy we are using Dell technologies to offer cutting-edge instruction to students," says Eves. "With Dell, we have consistent technology across the Academy, and we can help our students to advance by giving them the current and powerful technology they need to prepare for joining the labor force. That's a really compelling proposition for students. And by standardizing on Dell hardware, we have the opportunity to pursue virtualization initiatives and improve collaboration between departments."

Academy gives students high-performing computers and benefits from Dell support

The Academy can ensure that students have the stability they need because the Dell technologies offer high performance and reliability. "The Dell offerings we've implemented, from PowerEdge servers to Precision workstations, fully support the range of compute needs we have throughout the Academy," says Eves. "With Dell, we have a partner that provides reliable and high-performance equipment, which reduces downtime." Adds Becker, "The Dell PowerEdge servers just work. They're highly reliable and definitely powerful enough to meet our needs. And the Precision workstations offer amazing graphics performance and stability, so students can work on the projects they need to, whenever they want."

And with Dell ProSupport, The Academy has access to Dell technicians that help resolve issues quickly. "I work with many different kinds of technologies and I'm on a lot of technical support calls," says Becker. "Of all those vendors, Dell ProSupport provides the best response, hands down."

University can better support remote learning

The university will be able to give students strong performance and much more flexibility with Dell Precision R7610 rack workstations, which are being tested with Dell OptiPlex desktops and Dell Precision T7500 workstations as endpoint devices. "First of all, the R7610 allows me to put all my workstations in a room with cooler temperatures, which helps from a power and cooling standpoint," says Becker. "And the performance is excellent. We've used it to run some of our high-end design software, and it works great."

Eventually, off-site students may use R7610s as virtualized workstations. "The Dell Precision R7610 promises us more flexibility to accommodate our distance learning programs," says Eves. "We hope to have students connect remotely and still have all the power they need to get their projects done." The Academy will continue partnering with Dell to facilitate further innovation for students, faculty and staff. "We are very eager to continue pursuing our relationship with Dell as a strategic partner to put our school at the forefront of technology," says Eves. "And if we can give our students the best technology available, whether they're on campus or online, that's an excellent opportunity for our Academy."

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