

## Case Study

# The University of Texas at Austin takes significant step towards its cloud-first vision



**UT Austin partners with Avanade on highly complex migration of 24,000 faculty and staff to new cloud-based platform for email and calendaring**

**Moving a diverse user group to a single cloud-based platform**

The University of Texas at Austin's mission—to achieve excellence in the interrelated areas of education, research and public service—makes facilitating communications a key focus for the organization. And as one of the largest universities in the U.S., with more than 24,000 faculty and

staff across more than 45 Colleges, Schools and Units (CSUs), this is no mean feat.

Eager to provide faculty and staff with the latest email and calendaring tools, UT Austin's Information Technology Services (ITS) team embarked on an ambitious project to move to the latest version of Microsoft Office 365 based on Exchange 2013 shortly after it was introduced. The Office 365 platform was deemed the University's best fit for faculty and staff email and calendaring. It aligned with the campus' cloud-first strategy; eliminated the need to upgrade the hardware or infrastructure; and promised to

deliver more storage, flexibility and rich calendaring integration.

While technical issues are common with early adopter implementations, these challenges were compounded by UT Austin's decentralized and diverse IT environment. Partway through the initial round of migrations, Brad Englert, UT Austin's Chief Information Officer and Chief Operating Officer for ITS, recognized the University needed a revised approach and a new partner to help navigate the unique challenges of a diverse higher education campus IT environment. UT Austin turned to Avanade.

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### Better planning and improved communications with key stakeholders smooths migration

The ITS team worked quickly with Avanade to re-assess the project scope and develop and execute a new migration plan that took into account the diversity of platforms and requirements of the individual CSUs. Steps included:

- **Stabilize the first wave of users and re-evaluate the project scope.**

The first step was to restore business continuity for faculty and staff who experienced challenges in the first migration phase. Email incident triage was established to quickly resolve mission-critical issues and stabilize the infrastructure before continuing further migrations.

This pause in migrations gave Avanade time to fully assess the project scope, gather critical details from key stakeholders, and map out a plan in partnership with UT Austin's ITS team and Microsoft for how to successfully move forward. UT Austin and Avanade took the time to better understand user needs, identify potential pitfalls and build credibility with faculty and staff before any additional email accounts were slated for migration.

- **Develop a migration plan to move UT's highly diverse and disparate user groups onto a single cloud-based email platform.**

With 24,000 faculty and staff spanning 45 CSUs, UT Austin is like a sprawling city in which no two

neighborhoods are alike. And in order to foster innovation, the University's faculty have great freedom with regard to the IT environments in use. As a result, the campus had no single IT infrastructure or centralized email and calendaring platform. Rather, it had a diverse labyrinth of technologies and client access methods—more than 20 email servers were being used—to support each CSU.

More than 60 percent of the faculty and staff use Apple devices with the remainder on Windows or some other proprietary system across campus. This diversity in IT infrastructure created a level of complexity not typical of standard email and calendar migrations, even for large corporations.

For the next migration wave, UT Austin created a more thorough and tailored migration plan. The new plan addressed each CSU's specific needs and methodically brought faculty and staff onto the new, standardized Office 365 platform.

The team leveraged Avanade's Accelerate for Mailbox tool to mitigate human errors during each migration and accelerate the pace of migrations overall. This enabled UT Austin to move more than 1,000 email accounts a night onto the new platform. In addition, Avanade leveraged its close ties with Microsoft to help resolve the technology challenges with the migration, Apple incompatibilities, and the stability of the Office 365 platform.

- **Create a change management plan to ensure readiness and support for the migrations.**

Change is never easy—but it's even harder when it isn't effectively communicated to those who are likely to be most affected by it. UT Austin's ITS team leveraged Avanade's change management expertise to create a plan that communicated important information well in advance of a scheduled migration to affected faculty and staff. This helped avoid confusion, delays and service disruptions.

This communication plan included introductory meetings with each CSU's stakeholders to understand how they used email and calendaring to do their jobs; identify any dependencies; and establish optimum schedules for migration. Gaining the CSU's buy-in was critical, since their decision to move to Office 365 was voluntary.

For each migration, UT Austin also applied Avanade's change management best practices to inform and educate faculty and staff about key dates and milestones. And a "train the trainer" approach was used so UT Austin's ITS team could support and empower users on the new platform after the engagement ended. ITS staff were also on-site in each CSU after the nightly migrations to quickly address any issues.

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Working together with stakeholders, Avanade and UT Austin's ITS team have successfully migrated more than 95 percent of the University's faculty and staff onto the Office 365 email platform, with the remaining CSUs to follow during the slower summer months. Using the practices and procedures already in place from the stabilization effort, the second wave of migrations went smoothly with a migration success rate of 99.7 percent.

Today, UT Austin has virtually all of its email servers on the Office 365 platform, bringing much-needed standardization across the campus email system.

### UT Austin's move to cloud improves communications across the organization

UT Austin has taken a significant step toward its cloud-first vision by migrating its Colleges, Schools and Units to Office 365. With the move to cloud hosting for email, the University has gained a more flexible and scalable platform and avoided about \$500,000 in hardware replacement costs.

UT Austin faculty and staff are seeing a number of benefits with the new platform:

- Office 365 enables faculty and staff to share calendaring and email, as well as delegate tasks.
- Mailbox sizes have been significantly expanded from 2GB to up to 50GB in the cloud.
- Faculty and staff gained access to new features and functionality, such as new versions of Outlook for Mac that were only available on Office 365.

In addition, UT Austin has paved the way for future digital workplace improvements by building confidence in the University's ability to manage complex transitions to the cloud. Post-migration surveys of faculty and staff confirmed that the additional planning and change management activities had paid off. One department's director for IT commented, "You and your staff made this transition seamless. I don't know how it could have gone any better."

### Company overview

The University of Texas at Austin is a public research university and the flagship institution of The University of Texas System. Founded in 1883 as "The University of Texas," its campus is located in Austin—approximately 1 mile from the Texas State Capitol. The institution has one of the largest single-campus enrollments in the nation, with over 51,000 undergraduate and graduate students and over 24,000 faculty and staff.



#### About Avanade

Avanade leads in providing innovative digital services, business solutions and design-led experiences for its clients, delivered through the power of people and the Microsoft ecosystem. Our professionals combine technology, business and industry expertise to build and deploy solutions to realize results for clients and their customers. Avanade has 27,000 digitally connected people across 23 countries, bringing clients the best thinking through a collaborative culture that honors diversity and reflects the communities in which we operate. Majority owned by Accenture, Avanade was founded in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation. Learn more at [www.avanade.com](http://www.avanade.com).

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