UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO | PROBLEM SOLVED

The University of New Mexico Computer Science Department relies on NetApp® SolidFire® Element® Software to conduct the cutting-edge research the department is known for.

University of New Mexico Computer Sciences Gives NetApp SolidFire an A+ in Helping Students

The University of New Mexico, the state's flagship research institution, enrolls nearly 30,000 students across multiple campuses, with 1,500 studying in the computer science program. The university's infrastructure was struggling to keep up with the increasing demands on its IT network. After installing NetApp SolidFire Element Software, students and professors have a fast and reliable network to access research and schoolwork.

90%
deduplication

Immediate
VM availability

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"There's a lot to like about SolidFire, but the user interface makes everything so easy. No deep dives into menus, and things feel well thought out, like it was designed by people who actually use it. And getting information out takes just a click."

Rudy Martinez
senior system support analyst, University of New Mexico Computer Science Department

A university's academic reputation is driven by several factors, including discipline, research, and publication. To be successful, students and faculty need an agile foundation that automates access to fast and reliable technology, scaling out and in to accommodate their frequent changes in digital assets—often at a moment's notice.

"Everything is changing all the time. Every 3 to 4 months, we tear it all down and set it up again for the incoming class. New syllabus, new teachers, new students," says Rudy Martinez, a senior system support analyst with the University of New Mexico Computer Science Department.

Martinez's group is tasked with ensuring that the department remains on the cutting edge, balancing student and faculty requests for the latest data and information with the university's need for security. "We focus on security, securing computers and servers, and getting into the mindset of hackers. With that, we needed an infrastructure that enables us to completely shelter and prevent Computer Science Department coursework from reaching other parts of the university's IT ecosystem," he says.

After speaking with the university's NetApp account executive and solutions engineer, Martinez decided to adopt an environment consisting of SolidFire Element Software. The system, which was deployed in a week, has been running without incident since it went live.

"SolidFire Element Software is rock solid. It's the one thing I don't have to think about or worry about in my environment," Martinez says. "SolidFire allows us to spin up hundreds and hundreds of virtual machines at once for students with no waiting. Previously I would have to start 50 and wait for the filer with spinning drives to catch up, start another 50 and wait for the filer to catch up, and so on. Today, with SolidFire Element Software, I can start all of my 700 VMs at the same time. They all come up at once with the right amount of bandwidth."

ACCELERATING PERFORMANCE AND EFFICIENCY

Users used to complain about slow-running systems. By moving the workloads to SolidFire and refreshing to NetApp ONTAP® 9 data management software on NetApp FAS systems, the university has improved performance and efficiency. As a bonus, the institution is saving space through deduplication.

"We have professors come to us and say, 'I really want to do X, Y, or Z.' We're able to say, 'Yes, we can set up your cluster or amass a large amount of fast storage for your research or project.'

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When I was a student 20 years ago, it seemed like we had to do a lot of things on paper because the technology and money wasn't there to do these sorts of things. And with our NetApp FAS and SolidFire systems, I don't have to say no anymore," Martinez says.

"So if a student is doing a big data project and needs 5 terabytes, I say, 'OK, what do you want to name it?' In regard to setting up 500, 600, or 700 VMs, it's literally a few scripts that run and the VMs are made, and nobody's even aware of it in the background," he adds. "And because it's seamless and nobody knows about it, it speaks volumes about how good a product SolidFire is."

SOLIDFIRE INTERFACE MAKES WORK EVEN EASIER

Department officials not only appreciate SolidFire improved performance and reliability, they also praise the intuitive interface of Element Software.

"There's a lot to like about SolidFire, but the UI makes everything so easy," Martinez says. "No deep dives into menus, and things feel well thought out, like it was designed by people who actually use it. And getting information out takes just a click."

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