

### CASE STUDY

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS

Established in 1863 under the Morrill Land Grant Act as Massachusetts Agricultural College, and opened in 1867 on a 310-acre campus with four faculty members, four buildings and 56 students, "Mass Aggie" became Massachusetts State College in 1931 and subsequently the University of Massachusetts in 1947. Today, UMass Amherst is the flagship campus of the five-campus University of Massachusetts system and a leading center for public higher education in the Northeast.

Its 10 schools and colleges offer 88 undergraduate majors, 68 master's degrees and 48 doctoral programs to 24,000 students from all 50 United States and over 100 countries. As a major research university, UMass sponsored research activities total more than \$100 million a year.

### Evolving to Meet Faculty, Student and Staff Needs

UMass Amherst Provost Charlena Seymour envisioned 'technology-infused learning spaces' – a modern facility where today's learners could go, physically and virtually, to interact and collaborate. She envisioned group rooms which could accommodate teams of people, hundreds of workstations and workspaces, electronic classrooms used for teaching and learning information and staff of individuals that could provide just-in-time support to students and faculty 24 hours a day, five days a week. It would be here that digital course content would be readily available and accessible. This innovative concept, known as the Learning Commons, would provide new ways to learn, share information, deliver services and resources – as well as to diffuse instructional technology and make connections to the greater UMass community.

Provost Seymour successfully gained the attention of people who could make her vision a reality. In May 2005, UMass Amherst reallocated \$2.5 million to apply towards establishing the Learning Commons – and an operating budget of \$600,000 to ensure its ongoing support. More than 29,000 square feet were allocated for the project which, when opened, would offer 15 group rooms, three electronic classrooms, 250 workstations and workspaces, access to online lecture notes, course materials and online reserve materials, 400+ports for laptop access (to both the University's network and the Internet), 40 multi-media production workstations and 16 tablet PCs available for checkout.



### Key Facts

**Industry:** Higher Education

**Product:** Xythos Enterprise Document Manager 5.0

**Audience:** 24,000+ students and 1400+ faculty

### Benefits

- Enhance collaboration and learning
- Provide secure online location to store files
- Eliminate email for file storage
- Share digital versions of research almost instantaneously
- Improve productivity

### Why Xythos?

- Open standards-based and platform independent
- Offers the best features of both open source and commercial products
- Provides a system that faculty, staff and students can use
- Has wide adoption across universities



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**Richard Rogers**

*Professor of Resource Economics and faculty advisor to the Provost for Undergraduate Education  
UMass Amherst*

At UMass Amherst, David Powicki is the Assistant Director of Network Services and part of the Office of Information Technology. His team is responsible for core services that include the university’s public web site, public file sharing, email, DNS, DHCP and all services that run through the network and are delivered centrally. Powicki’s staff is currently involved in improving the IT infrastructure at UMass, exploring wireless access and a greater use of technology in teaching.

Richard Rogers is a professor of Resource Economics and faculty advisor to the Provost for Undergraduate Education. As part of his advisory responsibilities, Rogers looks at the intersection of information technology with instructional technology. He is also an early adapter of technology and a test bed for new solutions. In his Statistics class, for example, Rogers delivers content to his students via the web; they download and analyze the data he has provided, then deliver content back to him via the tablet PCs Rogers loans them during a session. As a result of the speed with which technology provides the data his students need to review, the tedious process of entering numbers has disappeared, allowing Rogers and his students to concentrate on distribution and analysis of data instead.

With such a strong technology component to the direction in which the Provost is guiding UMass, Powicki and Rogers work closely to anticipate, and meet, the information technology needs of faculty, students and staff.

## **Expanding the Learning Commons with Secure File Access and Collaboration**

Another important aspect of the Learning Common's vision was for students to be the creators of digital content. Key to that development would be the ability to safely store that content online. Faculty also needed a way to control their digital assets, whether for course content or research, and administrators wanted to be able to share information and securely store files online.

“Richard and I saw that people were using email as a secure place to store files but that didn’t work well when it came to sharing files. It concerned us that students were emailing attachments to one another, taking up valuable network resources. We also knew that faculty members who were working outside of their offices mailed files to themselves. It was very inefficient,” remarked Powicki. “To make matters even more ‘interesting’, with 56 students sending me their homework with attachments, I had to run to my office and move the emails off my system very quickly – or I would be unable to receive other messages and could miss something critical from a colleague. Having my email go over quota and shut down was just not acceptable,” Rogers added.

As a result, Powicki and Rogers looked for a product that was designed, from the beginning, to securely manage and store digital content and to facilitate the collaboration and learning that UMass desired. Unlike the existing system that was based on Windows™ file sharing and limited to providing network access only on campus (due to security concerns), the new solution had to provide levels of access and storage that the university had previously not achieved – and do so from anywhere.



*“When I’m away from campus, Xythos is the perfect way to access information that is stored on campus. Professors work long hours and tend to get insights at strange times. When they occur, we need to capture that information as part of our digital world, regardless of where we are or when that ‘aha moment’ happens.”*

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## A Web-Based, Standards-Based Solution

Led by the IT team under Powicki, the UMass IT staff looked at several online file storage systems. They evaluated both open source and commercial products, ultimately concluding that Xythos Software’s Enterprise Document Manager had the best features of both and, was designed from the ground up to be standards-based and platform independent. Xythos’ wide adoption among other colleges and universities was also an advantage.

“Our previous system could not be used for online file storage – it simply did not work. The first benefit we expect with the Xythos Enterprise Document Manager is that there will be fewer problems with people using email inboxes for file storage. Our faculty, students and staff will use Xythos for file storage and use a Xythos feature called Tickets to share files, instead of sending massive attachments around campus,” explained Powicki. “Xythos had the highest percent of people saying ‘Yes we can do that’ of the vendors with whom we spoke. The value that Xythos presented was considerable,” added Rogers.

Phase I for UMass is deploying Xythos to facilitate secure file-sharing between students. Not surprisingly, the first class that worked with the Xythos Enterprise Document Manager was taught by Rogers. “When I’m away from campus, Xythos is the perfect way to access information that is stored on campus. Professors work long hours and tend to get insights at strange times. When they occur, we need to capture that information as part of our digital world, regardless of where we are or when that ‘aha moment’ happens,” said Rogers.

## Enhancing Productivity and Collaboration

Both Powicki and Rogers expect that Xythos will be a productivity enhancer and a solution that faculty, staff and students will embrace to address their needs in a digital world. “With Xythos’ ability to track every version of a file that any person is working on, we can eliminate many headaches. It’s interesting already to note how much faster the pace of research is moving. We used to mail manuscripts, then we started to FedEx them—and now we can do it almost instantaneously with digital versions,” observed Rogers.

Within the Office of Information Technology (OIT), Powicki’s staff is moving to have all of its services be web-based. They currently have a web interface for email and will be deploying one for Udrive, the Xythos service. “As a result of making wise choices regarding our hardware and software investments, 16 people on our team are now supporting more than 30,000 accounts. The cooperation between OIT and the Provost’s office has certainly opened the door for us to prepare our students for the modern workplace – a workplace where they will deploy technology like Xythos in their daily tasks and lives,” concluded Powicki.

**For more information please call 1.888.4XYTHOS  
or visit [www.xythos.com](http://www.xythos.com)**