

Handing Over the Reins (and the Headaches): Harrison College

Harrison College — with 13 locations and over 30 fields of study — was facing the reality that it was time to upgrade its data center. All options were on the table, including whether to build new facilities, upgrade, or take an entirely different approach.

At the time, Harrison College managed every component of its IT systems, retaining physical possession of its hardware and data, with all the expense and concerns that entailed.

Not only was the existing system expensive, it did not lend itself well to expansion. But abandoning a familiar model for a modern yet unfamiliar solution takes a lot of convincing.

Joe Meadors, M.S. Ed., Senior Vice President – Information Services and Facilities, said, “We knew we had an outdated data center, and we were faced with remodeling or moving to a colocation model like IFN’s. We were also looking to bring our network to fiber connectivity. We sent out an RFP, and IFN could do it all. Others could do only parts.”

When Harrison chose IFN, it no longer had to foot the bills for HVAC, security, and redundancy. It didn’t have the looming demand for more IT space. It didn’t have to build its own fiber network, or lease from multiple other providers. “IFN keeps everything safe in its remote data center, accessible across all campuses and functions,” said Meadors.

Meadors noted that IFN’s scalable approach merged handily with Harrison’s needs. “Services are set up to accommodate the needs of each location and discipline,” Meadors said. “This scalability allowed Harrison College and IFN to build the entire 13-campus network all at once, rather than employing a potentially confusing or costly rollout.”

A COLOCATION MODEL MADE GROWTH MORE MANAGEABLE

The need for additional capacity never goes away, and soon Harrison College was looking to add facilities. “Since the initial installation, we’ve added a couple locations,” Meadors said. “They went up easily. The model is absolutely scalable. Everything IFN designed initially has been sufficient.”

Harrison wasn’t “behind,” but they saw the day, in the near future, when they would be. Harrison was smart to recognize future problems that its existing model and facilities wouldn’t be able to handle. “As businesses consider what to do with their data centers, the traditional thinking is to build their own. We have found a tremendous advantage in having a colocation facility,” Meadors said.

Meadors recommends this solution to other institutions. “There is a big economic advantage in using IFN’s hub,” he said. “Having a colocation facility has pretty dramatic economic and operational advantages. We don’t have to worry about cooling, power, physical security. All that is expensive — it’s all built into the IFN model.”

The IFN solution is simple in both concept and in execution. It allowed Harrison to maintain much of its existing structure — the parts that worked well. “Old data centers still exist, but only as spokes. The hub is IFN,” Meadors said. “Having our core data center in an IFN facility rather than in one of our buildings is a huge advantage. We have had terrific reliability with the IFN network, with very good response time.”



“WE KNEW WE HAD AN OUTDATED DATA CENTER.”

“We have found a tremendous advantage in having a colocation facility. Reliability, redundancy, less maintenance.”

Joe Meadors
Senior Vice President -
Information and Facilities,
Harrison College