



CASE STUDY



About Old Dominion University

Old Dominion University (ODU), a Virginia public doctoral research institution, is one of the largest providers of distance learning degree programs in the country. The university serves 4,000 students at 50 sites in Virginia, Washington, D.C., Arizona, Illinois, Washington, and Georgia, as well as U.S. Navy ships deployed around the world. ODU has been involved in technology-delivered distance learning since the mid-1980s. Their distance learning program, TELETECHNET, began as a synchronous satellite delivery program from their main campus in Norfolk, Virginia. Recently, the university has expanded into other delivery models, including two-way video, the Internet, CD-ROM, and streaming video, to reach a broader range of students. www.odu.edu



ProxSys Media Asset Management

With an intuitive browser-based interface, robust features, and scalable configuration options, the complete line of ProxSys solutions from Focus Enhancements makes media asset management simple and cost-effective. With ProxSys, you can integrate your entire workflow, including acquisition, storage, and distribution, to gain unparalleled efficiencies.

ProxSys Brings New Workflow Efficiencies to ODU's Distance Learning Program

The Challenge

At Old Dominion University (ODU), distance learning comprises 25 to 30 percent of the university's overall student population, with more than 28,000 long-distance class enrollments each year. The university leverages various delivery methods—six-channel satellite system, videoconferencing, videostreaming over the Internet, asynchronous online classes, and DVDs—to reach students through a network of nearly 200 community colleges and military institutions nationwide.

Hampered by a labor-intensive, analog tape-based process, the university looked to automate their playout workflow, initially targeting a satellite channel dedicated to professional skills development. This channel broadcasts programs via MPEG-2 over satellite to help ODU students improve their leadership, interviewing, and other professional skills. "We were using DVCAM and Betacam tapes and manually sending the output to the satellite encoder," explained Miguel Ramlatchan, director of operations and engineering for ODU's Office of Distance Learning. "This process meant that someone needed to be at the control facility to press start and stop for both the programs and the background filler."

The Solution

ODU selected the ProxSys™ Media Asset Management solution from Focus Enhancements to store, schedule, and automate content playout and distribution. Installation and integration took only half a day—with the ingest station installed in one room and the RAID array, a server, and the playout station installed in a rack down the hall.

"With ProxSys, we've been able to condense the entire workflow to just a few simple steps," explained Miguel. "The system is very user friendly. First we feed ProxSys with a new tape, give the file a name, and hit Record." The simple, drag-and-drop ProxSys user interface minimized the learning curve. Ease of use was a critical factor for ODU, since the staff members who are responsible for the system have backgrounds in communications and video production, not IT.

Results

With ProxSys, ODU saves 80 to 85 percent in people hours compared with their old tape-based system. Since the playout station supports time-based scheduling, ODU staff can develop playlists containing both class and filler content, define which program plays when, and let the system handle the rest. By automating playout, the university has eliminated the need to have a staff member physically press the Start/Stop button each time.

Beyond workflow automation, ODU plans to integrate ProxSys' storage and distribution capabilities to develop enhanced offerings for its students. "Our philosophy is to match technology with students' needs," said Miguel. He visualizes encoding all classes onto a future Digital Asset Management System—enabling the university to offer video on demand to its distance learning students.





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About Focus Enhancements

Innovation, efficiency, and superior quality are the foundation on which Focus Enhancements builds its products. A world leader in advanced video production, digital asset management, and digital signage solutions, Focus delivers products that perform superbly day in and day out and backs them with unparalleled service and support.

For example, if ODU students miss a satellite class, they need to order a DVD or a VHS copy to view at home in order to catch up on the material. ODU's new media asset management system can provide a more efficient, and convenient, option for students and administrators alike. With the new browser-based media server, students will be able to simply log on to their instructor's website, select the missed day, and view the stream online—giving them real-time access to material instead of waiting for a tape to be sent and delivered.

In addition, video on demand will enable ODU to broaden its current student base. Satellite-based classes are typically held at "satellite campuses," a network of 200 community colleges and military institutions. If a potential student cannot make the scheduled time for a class, alternative options are limited. Video on demand opens up new possibilities and gives the university flexibility to reach students with time conflicts.

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