

Nutanix Enterprise Cloud with
AHV is the Ideal Platform for
University Business and
Academic Applications



Elizabeth City State University Makes the Educated Decision to Migrate to Nutanix

CHALLENGE

Eric Zarghami is the Deputy Chief Information Officer at Elizabeth City State University. He is responsible for planning, managing, and organizing all IT operations for the university. "When I joined ECSU two years ago, we had a heterogeneous collection of disparate servers, a small cloud built on Hyper-V, and two VMware 5.5 clusters. Product knowledge wasn't distributed across IT teams, so we had one person dedicated to managing each system working in a silo'd fashion. After studying the environment, I realized that we needed to find a more reliable, cost-effective, and unified solution where we wouldn't have to worry about managing multiple systems and contracts."

ECSU's workloads include Active Directory, DNS, and the university's core business services. They also host a variety of academic applications for ECSU's faculty and students. "We get a lot of requests for R&D servers, since many of our professors have their own budgets for infrastructure," noted Zarghami. "Although these systems are purchased from their departmental funds, we are responsible for the deployment and ongoing management of all systems and applications."

Provisioning Delays

One of the biggest challenges facing ECSU's IT team was the delay in deploying new infrastructure. "With no cross-functional training for our staff, our end users would often have to wait several days for provisioning until the person responsible for that infrastructure was available," Zarghami said. "We also lacked visibility into the disparate environment to know which systems we could adjust to allocate resources, and that led to more delays in response. As a result, we would often breach our client SLAs."

Aging Infrastructure

Many of ECSU's existing systems had also reached end-of-life, making the refresh even more urgent. The IT team was also not comfortable with the choice of hypervisor. "We were paying two separate VMware licenses for our systems," Zarghami said. "We didn't like the idea of moving on with Hyper-V in that environment, due to its poor support of Linux OS and our heavy use of Cisco virtual appliances that are Linux-based."

SOLUTION

Zarghami and his team evaluated several different legacy infrastructure solutions for the refresh. "Our existing vendors were trying to sell us systems that were too powerful for our needs since they hadn't performed accurate sizing measurements," said Zarghami. "The proposed solutions would have consumed all of our IT budget for that fiscal year, so we started looking for other options. Suresh Murugan (our CIO) and I are what researchers call 'early adopters' in the innovation adoption lifecycle and always on the hunt for the next big thing. Our decisions are usually augmented with Gartner's Magic Quadrant reports. When we saw that Nutanix was a leader in hyperconverged infrastructure, we started digging. Shortly after that, Nutanix's Enterprise Cloud software and AHV became our solution of choice."

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– Eric Zarghami,
Deputy Chief Information Officer,
Elizabeth City State University



ECSU made the decision to run the Nutanix software on Cisco UCS servers. “We already had a good experience with UCS equipment,” Zarghami reported. “We knew that Nutanix offered its own hardware, and were thrilled to learn that Cisco UCS was also fully tested and supported. We like that Nutanix gives us the freedom to choose hardware platforms and leverage our existing investments.”

RESULTS

An Easy Deployment

“The professional services contract was offered to Nutanix, since we didn’t want to involve any channel partners,” admitted Zarghami. “We provided the Nutanix team with all of our virtual machines and they started developing a plan for the 2-3 day engagement. After building the 5-node cluster on the first day, they made sure that Prism was up, it was IP’d, and was wired. The engagement was complete by the end of the second day. The entire process was very pleasant and straightforward.”

Unsurpassed Ease-of-Use

“Nutanix is very simple to use,” stated Zarghami. “Previously, we needed 3-4 dedicated technicians to manage our servers, storage, virtualization, and networking systems. With Nutanix’s hyperconverged infrastructure solution, we now need just one admin, since any member of our team can manage Nutanix after less than a day of training. Compared to the complexity of VMware, Nutanix is a breath of fresh air. Everything takes just a few clicks, and that’s it.”

Better Visibility with Prism

“We really like the visibility we get with Prism,” said Zarghami. “With other management solutions, you have to log into multiple interfaces to understand what’s happening. But thanks to the comprehensive all-in-one interface, we can instantly see everything we need in one pane of glass. Our virtualization admin was spending 40% of his time managing the VMware environment and logging into different clusters, but Nutanix takes just 10% of his time.”

Faster Provisioning

“With Nutanix, provisioning and de-provisioning machines is one less thing we need to worry about,” noted Zarghami. “And thanks to the all-flash systems, Nutanix runs unbelievably fast. Sometimes it boots so quickly, it’s like turning on the TV. One of the engineers on my team wanted to grab a cup of coffee, so he restarted the system. Before he was able to leave the office, he noticed that the system was already back up again. It was that fast! It does cut down on coffee runs for our team, but I can live with that.”

Smaller Footprint and Lower Costs

“Our previous infrastructure used to fill three full racks, and now we have one rack that’s only partially full,” Zarghami noted. “That results in a lot of power savings for the organization. And since we also went with AHV, we didn’t have to renew our VMware licenses and are saving tens of thousands of dollars in annual license fees.”

Easier Snapshots and Faster Restores

“We really like the ability to take daily snapshots with Nutanix Guest Tools (NGT),” explained Zarghami. “It works so well that we no longer need our previous backup system. Now if one of our end users is missing a file, we can just go back to yesterday’s snapshot, open it, and immediately find the missing file. NGT makes us into IT heroes!”

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NEXT STEPS

ECSU is currently using the Microsoft Azure cloud for some of its workloads. "One of our projects on the horizon is implementing backup in Azure, and Nutanix can us with that," explained Zarghami. "If I'm going to utilize a third-party cloud, I want the engine to be the same as what we are using in-house. Nutanix already has our trust for our on-prem deployments, and we'd rather rely on Nutanix in the public cloud as well. We don't want to introduce another technology that may or may not be fully compatible with what we currently have. We plan on taking an organic approach, putting everything we can on Nutanix going forward."

A Great Vendor Relationship

"Another thing that sets Nutanix apart from other vendors is their approach to the customer relationship," concluded Zarghami. "They aren't as flamboyant as some of their competitors during the initial conversations, with elaborate marketing presentations. The Nutanix engineer went over his PowerPoint slides with us and showed us how exactly it worked. He was able to quickly understand our needs, recommend the right solution, and deliver accordingly. Nutanix doesn't try to oversell equipment upfront like some of the other vendors. They only sell what we need today, but told us if our environment grows, they could quickly scale the solution. The Nutanix business approach is very honest, straightforward, and ethical, and their solutions are among the best in the industry."

COMPANY

Elizabeth City State University (ECSU) is a historically black, public college located in Elizabeth City, North Carolina. Founded in 1891, ECSU now offers baccalaureate, professional, and master's degrees for a diverse student body of 1,500 students from North Carolina and around the world.

INDUSTRY

Higher Education

BUSINESS NEEDS

Aging, disparate IT infrastructure environment was difficult to manage and due for a refresh.

SOLUTION

- › Nutanix Enterprise Cloud
- › Acropolis, including AHV Virtualization
- › Prism Management
- › Cisco UCS Servers

BENEFITS

- › Reduced time to provision new applications and infrastructure
- › Cut administrative overhead by 4x
- › Reduced datacenter footprint from 4 racks to <1
- › Achieved the ability to restore files quickly and easily from daily snapshots



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Nutanix makes infrastructure invisible, elevating IT to focus on the applications and services that power their business. The Nutanix enterprise cloud platform leverages web-scale engineering and consumer-grade design to natively converge compute, virtualization and storage into a resilient, software-defined solution with rich machine intelligence. The result is predictable performance, cloud-like infrastructure consumption, robust security, and seamless application mobility for a broad range of enterprise applications.

Learn more at www.nutanix.com or follow us on [Twitter@nutanix](https://twitter.com/nutanix).

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