



# DeVry University adopted Azure Lab Services to unify onsite and online learning environments

Customer

DeVry University

Products and Services

Azure

Industry

Higher Education

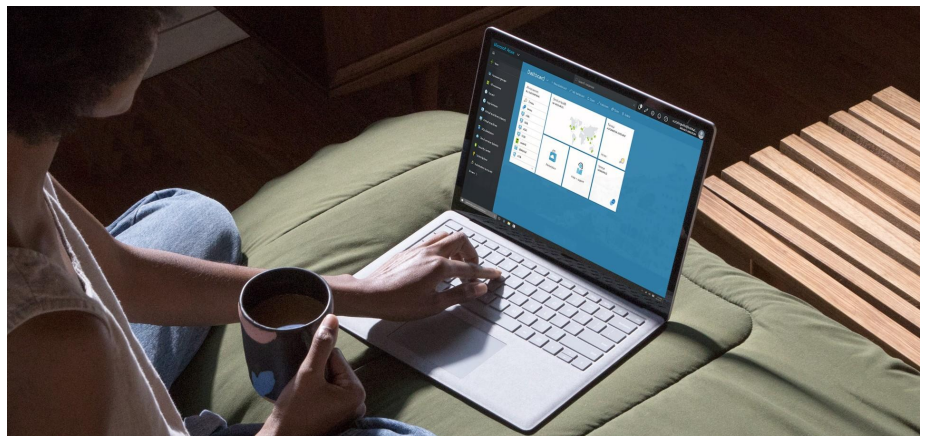
Organization Size

Large (1,000 - 9,999 employees)

Country

United States

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With more than 25,000 students, DeVry University serves a mixture of traditional, non-traditional, and graduate students who attend classes onsite and online from across the country. The university was presented with a unique challenge: how could it streamline learning environments for its students, both in person (onsite) and online? To address this challenge, DeVry adopted Azure Lab Services to create a more flexible and simplified educational experience for students, faculty, and staff. Having already adopted Office 365, Azure SQL, and Visual Studio, DeVry was able to use its existing Microsoft platforms and software to create a unified solution for students and faculty.

There is no such thing as a typical college student. Some students attend college immediately after high school, while others obtain a degree after a few years in the workforce. They are parents and spouses and are enrolled full-time or part-time. Thanks to the internet, students can virtually attend any school of their choice. Today, schools are taking all these factors into consideration when designing flexible degree programs to meet students where they are.

Founded in 1931 as DeForest Training School, DeVry University's main campus center is located in Naperville, Illinois. College enrollment of 25,235 students reflects a mixture of traditional and non-traditional undergraduate and graduate students who attend classes onsite, online, or a hybrid of both, all over the US.

Differences in course models presented a unique challenge for DeVry: how could it streamline the learning environments for all course offerings, both onsite and online? In early 2018, DeVry embarked on a digital transformation journey to adopt Microsoft Azure Lab Services for a more flexible and simplified educational experience for students, faculty, and operations.

DeVry already utilized Microsoft Office 365, Azure SQL, and Visual Studio, so Azure Lab Services seemed like a logical way to extend student and faculty capabilities while operating within the college's existing license and domain structure. By combining its existing Microsoft platforms and software with Azure Lab Services, DeVry has created a unified solution for its students and faculty.

## Designing for student creativity

"Up until our recent program overhaul, onsite and online students had very different educational experiences," says Jim Karagiannes, PhD, Professor of Engineering and Information Services and Member of DeVry's National Curriculum Development Team at DeVry.

Traditionally, students used software packages on the university-provided Citrix environment, but they didn't have administrative access in that environment.

DeVry wanted students to have access to platforms and software that operated within the same environments they would encounter in their post-graduation careers. Azure Lab Services gave students the creativity to command their machines and software and download applications to further their individual education goals.

"Students who have taken courses on the new Azure Lab Services platform say it's a far better learning environment than previous platforms," says Karagiannes.

## Putting flexibility in the hands of the faculty

Azure Lab Services also introduced the standardization and simplification that DeVry leaders wanted from course to course. Faculty members can now creatively develop their curriculum and truly own their courses. Instead of reaching out to IT for support,

faculty members can now change environment templates on their own and solve problems up front.

“We tried to remove some of the IT and administrative overhead and allow professors to teach courses and deliver labs with minimal IT interaction,” explains Jeff Krischel, platform owner and architect for Microsoft at DeVry.

Onboarding new faculty members to Azure Lab Services is easy. They’re assigned a mentor, and within a few hours of training, they’re up and running, and can set up their own courses. This process used to take weeks and required faculty members to learn different vendor platforms and enter IT helpdesk tickets if an error occurred.

“DeVry is trying to find innovative ways to move to a vendor-hosted model for many services, which reduces maintenance and other overhead IT resource capacities and frees IT up to focus on future state and solutions,” says Krischel. Since the IT overhead is no longer there, the focus can now be on other ways to enhance the student experience.

Prior to adopting Azure Lab Services, IT contracted with multiple vendors to provide simulation software and other services for students. Metrics and cost analyses were difficult to aggregate, but this data is now available in one place within DeVry’s Azure subscription.

“This really takes the burden off what educational institutions would normally have to do to create physical lab spaces and cuts down on the traditional back-and-forth with multiple vendors,” explains Karagiannes. Azure Lab Services is more flexible and simpler to use, which means DeVry no longer must work within the confines of different vendor environments.

## Rolling out DeVry’s Azure Lab Services pilot nationwide

In July 2018, DeVry launched its first two pilot classes on Azure Lab Services, and more courses were integrated into the new platform during the September and November 2018 sessions. DeVry launched its first fully integrated courses nationwide in September 2019—approximately six courses—where every student in each section of those courses used Azure Lab Services.

“Azure Lab Services provides more flexibility in classes and allows the faculty to be more engaged with students,” concludes Karagiannes. “It’s a big thing for student–faculty relationships.”

Although adopting new technology into a college’s curriculum and operational structure can be difficult, DeVry’s adoption of Azure Lab Services was smoother than expected. As the pilot program rolls out nationwide, DeVry will continue to find new ways to enhance the student experience.

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—Jim Karagiannes: PhD, Professor of Engineering and Information Services and Member of the National Curriculum Development Team  
DeVry University