

Seton Hall Backpack Case Study Transcript

STEVE LANDRY:

"I'm Steven Landry, I'm chief information officer at Seton Hall University. Our goal for Backpack is to give our students the tools they need to be successful in their academic careers. We recognize that students often need help organizing their academic work. As a father of two teenagers, I recognize that students are often focused on tomorrow. They're not looking at the big picture of when assignments are due and in what time frame. So they are easily overwhelmed with the peaks and valleys that occur in their academic schedules, when with a little planning they could have easily spread out their workload and made it more manageable.

Seton Hall University is also a ubiquitous computing campus which means we provide a laptop to all of our students as part of their tuition and fees. Last year, the Dean of Freshman Studies, Tracy Gotley, approached us with the idea of incorporating an academic planner into the laptop that we provide all of our students. After working with Agilix, we found that Backpack really met Freshman Studies' vision of enabling students to be more organized and more productive in their academic work."

STUDENT:

"For me the benefits of Backpack are like this. I have the chance to check my calendar to be ready for my student activities on campus. It always helps me to do my assignments from my teachers at home, even when I'm not online, working offline. That's good. It's easy, it's the easiest way to perform our student life here at Seton Hall for example."

PAUL FISHER

"Many of our courses here at Seton Hall utilize technology either to supplement their on-ground experience or to teach wholly on line. The benefit of Backpack is that it truly breaks the tether that our students have to be connected and online all the time to fulfill their academic work.

Backpack allows our students to synchronize that data with their academic planner, keep themselves well organized, annotate their notes on materials from the faculty, and search it later. It truly allows our students to have a mobile learning environment.

It completely supports our distance learning, our athletes who are on the road any number of days throughout the semester, and our commuter students and our graduate students who learn in a very different way than our undergraduate, resident students do."

STEVE LANDRY

"While each year more and more of our students are coming to Seton Hall University with broad band access from home, we recognize that a large segment of our students and our faculty as well, continue to be accessing the Internet through a dial-up connection that does not provide them with the bandwidth they need to access the rich media content that's in the Blackboard system.

Backpack enables them to download that material when they're at school when they have access to the high bandwidth connection, then to continue to be productive when they have no or little access to the Internet."

PAUL FISHER

"Seton Hall has a renowned athletics program. As a consequence our students and our student athletes are on the road a lot at away games. Backpack allow our students to take their academic work with them"

STEVE LANDRY

"Our initial deployment of Backpack was to our freshman in the University life program. We see enormous benefit from Backpack for our graduate students as well. Graduate students face a different problem than our undergraduate students.

As I mentioned, our undergraduates need to become better organized. Our graduate students need to be highly productive. Our graduate students are typically professionals that are working full time. They cannot afford down time. They really need to be productive all the time and make best possible use of the time they are able to devote to their academic work.

So Backpack is going to enable them to be much more productive as well."

PETER FISHER

"Graduate students have very different need than undergraduate students. Typically they're professionals; they have families, and one Internet connection. Fighting with their kids and their spouses on whose going to do what work online tonight is a daily occurrence in most households, at least from my own experience. Backpack allows graduate students to synchronize their learning materials and then take it elsewhere so that they can allow another family member to utilize that one online connection that they may have in their household."

STEVE LANDRY

"Another advantage we see to Backpack is it allows us to develop a more fault-tolerant system. Our students increasingly demand 24:7 access to their learning materials particularly our graduate students who are often professionals working at odd times.

We're not able to produce an environment in which our servers are completely up 24:7. We need to take them down occasionally for maintenance. Backpack enables us to produce a user experience of having 24:7 access to those learning materials."

PETER FISHER

"Seton Hall University's mission statement states that we will provide an innovative technology environment. That requires us to keep our systems up to par and up to peak with the latest upgrades, patches, and releases of software. In consequence of the technology and online learning that we do our universities are now 24:7, we don't close down. We are teaching and we are learning all the time. Our distance education programs never have a gap in that time. Backpack allows us to bring down our systems to do general maintenance, required maintenance, while our students still have access to their academic work. Future releases of the program, we hope, will allow us to have the students reply and submit work offline and synchronize back with the learning management system in those times when the student either is connected for their own reasons or the University is performing required maintenance.

This technology allows our students to keep up with their class work, with their homework, stay organized, stay on task, and stay on time."

STEVE LANDRY

"In terms of future uses of Backpack, our next goal is to deploy Backpack to our distance learning students. Our distance learning students often have slow bandwidth connections to the campus and because they are often professionals, very busy people; they are much less tolerant than our undergraduate students to network outages or periods where there may be bandwidth contention. We believe that Backpack with the distance learning students is going to make their experience with the Blackboard learning system much more productive.

We believe that Backpack is going to have significant benefit for the university as a whole as well. By increasing our student's academic success their first year, we're going to improve overall retention of the University, and that in turn is going to make Seton Hall a more desirable place to learn.

We see enormous benefits of Backpack to our learning community. The ability to organize their materials, the 24:7 access. We're very pleased with our decision to work with Agilix to introduce Backpack into our suite of supporting tools."

STUDENT

"We're very happy that Agilix has built Backpack for us."

PAUL FISHER

"The Seton Hall Teaching, Learning & Technology Center is happy to have partnered with Agilix to roll out crucial functionality to our campus. The future of this product promises it's the next killer app."