Colorado College Earns Straight A’s by Modernizing Data Protection with Actifio

The Actifio “Flexibility Factor” is Top of the Class Across Campus

Summary
The Colorado College was challenged to implement a modern and comprehensive data backup platform. They needed to expand coverage of their production applications and replace an outdated tape-based system. After extensive research, they selected Actifio for affordable on-campus data protection, ability to connect to Google Cloud, and broad capabilities that can extend functionality to Disaster Recovery (DR), data retention, and high-quality DevOps acceleration.

“Everything about Actifio implementation and operation has been absolutely smooth and it was extremely quick to deploy. Actifio support walked us through it with a few phone calls and they were immediately available if we needed any help.”

KEITH CONGER, COLORADO COLLEGE SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATOR

KEY FACTS
Who: The Colorado College, a private liberal arts college in Colorado Springs, CO
Challenges: Data backup coverage, speed, and complexity. Managing legacy tape infrastructure
IT Environment: Oracle, Banner ERP, 90% VMware, Dell, Brocade, Pure storage, Actifio Sky, Google Vault
Solution: Actifio Sky combined with Google Cloud Platform.
Organization Overview

The Colorado College (CC) was established as a private liberal arts institution in 1874, two years before Colorado became a state. In 1970, the College introduced its “Block Plan,” an intensive and immersive academic schedule that allows students to engage with a single subject for three and a half weeks. For the 2,000 enrolled students, the college runs one block at a time, with each intense block covering the same amount of material as a semester system. The curriculum includes several unique programs that range from Southwest studies to Environmental Sciences, Latin American, Russian and Eurasian studies, among many others.

The Challenge

The small IT organization at Colorado College is made up of about 30 staff managing two Data Centers on campus. They also have a unique colocation agreement to house emergency systems 200 miles north of the CC campus at the University of Wyoming (UW) Data Center in Laramie, WY. Their challenge was IT resources spread thinly across administrative and academic support systems. As a result, only a small number of servers were being backed up regularly. Several production systems had no regular backup at all. Using an outdated Commvault platform attached to a tape library, they were shipping tapes offsite. “And, as everyone knows,” Conger said, “tape libraries are probably the most problematic pieces of hardware that IT people need to deal with.” The time consumed handling tape and the extremely slow backup and recovery times were serious issues.

Beyond the spotty backup coverage and unreliable tape systems, the IT team had another critical challenge – funding a modern replacement system for data protection. So, they formed a group to explore alternative solutions and build the business case.

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"Using Actifio to put our backup data in Google Cloud is just a first step. It gets us that much closer to DR in the cloud. That’s next."

KEITH CONGER, COLORADO COLLEGE SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATOR

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The Solution

The first backup replacement proposal considered was a solution from a major hardware vendor that would continue use of the existing tape system on site, coupled with continuing offsite archival tape storage. This approach was not funded, in part because the internal trend was moving to increase virtual servers which would be better accommodated by a more modern method. And most importantly, they wanted a system that would do away with tape.

The next round looked at several modern solutions, including Actifio. The CC team preferred a virtual solution that could run without dedicated appliance hardware. And the “flexibility factor” was important. They wanted deployment options that would cover on-premise, remote, and cloud alternatives. They needed speed and scalability. After careful review, Actifio’s virtual data services stood out distinctly from the competition with advanced functionality for backup, Disaster Recovery, and application development. In addition to favorable pricing and operational simplicity, Actifio also provided effortless data transfer to Google Cloud services.
“The Actifio solution has dramatically reduced our time to recovery. It has also reduced our administrative workload while enhancing our backup/DR, DevOps and compliance. Our previous solution was so old and out of spec that it’s tough to calculate the actual savings.”

KEITH CONGER, COLORADO COLLEGE SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATOR

The Colorado College now has Actifio installed in both campus Data Centers as well as offsite at UW in Laramie, WY. Actifio simultaneously protects data on campus and at the remote site. Actifio is also used to move archive data to Google Cloud. “Actifio is simple, intuitive,” said Conger. “It has some very cool features, like the content catalog with a Google-like search function that makes it simple to restore a file or a server – even when the user isn’t entirely sure how to describe it. It’s just so much better than the old way of doing things. We’ve been able to restore critical data quickly every time. Also, with reduced management overhead, we’ve been able to free up time to work on additional projects. Everyone in IT breathed a sigh of relief when we implemented Actifio.” Another big plus for the CC team is renewed confidence across the campus in the speed and reliability of data backup and recovery. A process that could have taken eight hours with the old system has become nearly instantaneous. All their production systems are now fully protected, and they are looking at new uses for Actifio for application development and enhanced Disaster Recovery.

“We’re getting our Oracle DBAs interested in using Actifio to save time and automate manual development processes. A plan is being made to use Actifio located at the University of Wyoming site for active-active processing. We’re also moving to expand our use of cloud services using Actifio integration with Google Cloud. All of this shows Actifio’s fantastic flexibility factor.”

KEITH CONGER, COLORADO COLLEGE SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATOR

Immediate Benefits

Low Recovery Point and Recovery Time Objectives (RPO & RTO)

• Server backups expanded from 10 to 300 servers
• VM recovery times reduced from average 8 hours to ~15 minutes

Today Colorado College enjoys incremental forever, application consistent backup simplicity from a virtual appliance that delivers reliability, speed and archival connection to Google Cloud. College administrators have extreme confidence that their data is well protected and can be easily recovered instantly when necessary.
About Actifio

Actifio virtualizes the data that’s the lifeblood of businesses in more than 35 countries around the world. Its Virtual Data Pipeline™ technology enables businesses to manage, access, and protect their data faster, more efficiently, and more simply by decoupling data from physical storage, much the same way a hypervisor decouples compute from physical servers. For enterprise-class backup modernization, self-serve instant data access, or service provider business transformation, Actifio is the first and only enterprise class copy data virtualization platform.

For additional information, visit Actifio at www.actifio.com or contact Actifio at info@actifio.com or 855.886.8997.