

Modernizing MyCalStateLA Intranet Portal and Sign-On Experience

Cal State LA is the premier comprehensive public university in the heart of Los Angeles and is ranked number one in the United States for the upward mobility of its students. Cal State LA is dedicated to engagement, service, and the public good, offering nationally recognized programs in science, the arts, business, criminal justice, engineering, nursing, education, and the humanities. Founded in 1947, the University serves more than 28,000 students and has more than 245,000 distinguished alumni.

Cal State LA started working with Compass365 in 2017 to implement the ServiceNow to DocuSign connector, eSignifi. Building on that relationship, Alexander Harwood (Alex), Director of IT Client Support Services, brought in Compass365 again in 2019 to complete a Microsoft 365 Assessment and Roadmap engagement. Ingrid Camill, Solutions Architect & Director, worked with various departments to understand their needs and provided a “recommendations roadmap” to address the Microsoft platform needs. Alex also kept Cal State LA’s commitment to equity, including the importance of accessibility, at the forefront of the assessment. During this engagement, a discussion began around modernizing the intranet using SharePoint Online and challenges with the single sign-on (SSO) experience. This case study focuses on the effort to replace Cal State LA’s intranet portal and improve the SSO experience.

THE CHALLENGE

Faculty, students, and administrators all needed to access an organized, easy to use, and easy to access intranet. Cal State LA prides itself on its IT infrastructure and its continuous journey of digital transformation and modernization. Universities in the United States also have to maintain rigorous accessibility and compliance standards to comply with policy requirements. Compass365 and implementation partner Butterfly Technologies were brought in by Cal State LA to modernize the University’s MyCalStateLA intranet portal and their SSO experience.

“The old system never met user expectations. It was clumsy and we were working against a real tech debt.”

Alex Harwood, Director of IT Client Support Services,
Cal State LA

SUCCESS METRICS

- Deliver a modern SharePoint Online intranet portal
- Ensure equity and accessibility standards are met
- Leverage Microsoft 365 licenses
- Provide a better user experience via SSO
- Deliver quickly over Spring Break and stay within budget

INDUSTRY

Education

PLATFORMS AND SOLUTIONS

- Microsoft SharePoint Online
- Azure Active Directory
- Azure SSO

“Compass365 does whatever it takes to solve problems. Other companies may have a wide net of partners, but they are the first vendor I’ve seen go outside their direct staff to get to a solution. If we’ve got an issue, I’m asking Cathy Ashbaugh.”

Alex Harwood, Director of IT Client Support
Services, Cal State LA

ABOUT COMPASS365

Compass365, a Microsoft Gold Partner, combines our years of SharePoint and Microsoft 365 expertise with proven methods to improve the way companies work, operate, and confidently get the value from their Microsoft investments.

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THE INVESTIGATION

During the Compass365 discovery process and through continued discussion about digital transformation and modernization, Compass365 learned that Cal State LA was ready to begin a multi-tiered project with a new, modern, accessible version of its MyCalStateLA intranet portal. They needed an easier SSO experience, leveraging the Microsoft 365 (SharePoint Online) license the university already owned. After successful Proof of Concept projects were conducted throughout 2020, the full implementation project kicked off in December of 2020 with a go-live ask for Spring Break of 2021.

KEY ITEMS IDENTIFIED AS INTEGRAL FOR DELIVERY

SharePoint Intranet Portal:

- Meet equity and accessibility standards
- Leverage modern technology the university already owns
- Allow more participation for the creation and posting of fresh content
- Cloud-based solution

SSO Migration:

- Eliminate multiple logins for different systems
- Leverage modern technology the university already owns
- Create an SSO framework from which to continue digital transformation
- Better user experience

THE SOLUTION

Compass365 and Butterfly Technologies migrated 60 service providers, maturing Cal State LA's SSO architecture to a more structured and strategic position for enterprise wide SSO services and replaced the legacy MyCalStateLA intranet and SSO portal. The new SSO architecture enhances operational reporting, enabling Cal State LA to meet compliance policy requirements for authentication and authorization with the Azure platform and its SSO features. The Azure SSO feature, Azure Active Directory (AAD), provides Cal State LA with the ability to authenticate against the university's AAD, permitting users to use their university credentials to access AAD, Office 365, and compatible services.

By leveraging SharePoint Online to host the new intranet and SSO portal, Cal State LA will offer the university community a portal based on modern, accessible web technology. Compass365 and Butterfly Technologies, with the intense commitment of Alex Harwood and Cal State University staff, successfully delivered in time for go-live during Spring Break of 2021. Within a week, more than 20,000 users had accessed the systems with little to no reported issues.

"We completed the SSO cut over in five days. I did not expect to get any sleep, but we saw almost no issues. We got great feedback, including a lot of random compliments. There was a huge sense of accomplishment with this project."

Alex Harwood, Director of IT Client Support Services,
Cal State LA

COLLABORATION AND MODERNIZATION

The Intranet Portal and SSO modernization project is phase one of Cal State LA's digital transformation pathway. Compass365 and Butterfly Technologies completed this project on pace within a tight 3-month deadline by effectively listening and collaborating on discovery and due diligence with Cal State LA's IT team.

Cal State LA is looking forward to more audience targeting and personalization for content and continuing migrations with all departments into SharePoint and continues to seek ways to improve the authentication process. The envisioning process for phase two has already kicked off with Compass365 and Butterfly Technologies and will bring additional enhancements to the user experience for its faculty, students, and administrators while improving operational efficiencies to the back office.

With their continued commitment to digital transformation, developing equitable systems and improving the experience of students, staff, and faculty, it is easy to see how Cal State LA is ranked one of the best public universities in the county.