SOLUTION SUMMARY

The University of Michigan (U-M) sought to increase collaboration and innovation through cutting-edge technology, including a cloud-based file storing and sharing solution. The solution would have to work in a decentralized environment and outperform the third-party consumer cloud-services individual users were rapidly adopting to meet their collaboration needs.

U-M leveraged the collective power of its Internet2 membership and deployed NET+ Box, a leading enterprise Cloud Content Management (CCM) platform tailored to meet the needs of research and education (R&E) institutions through the peer-led NET+ service validation and vetting process.

COLLABORATORS

• University of Michigan

PRODUCTS & SERVICES

• Internet2 NET+ Box

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

• Internet2 NET+ Initiative

THE PROJECT

In 2010, U-M launched NextGen Michigan, a five-year plan to adopt cutting-edge technology that advances research, teaching, and learning at the university. One component of that plan is M+Box, U-M’s cobranded adoption of NET+ Box. CIO Laura Patterson and her team used their Internet2 membership to launch NET+ Box as a file-sharing, storage, and collaboration solution across the university, with the ultimate goal of promoting greater collaboration and faster innovation.

“Collaboration is very strategic to the future of the University of Michigan. We’re seeking to build a collaborative environment that is easy for researchers, students, and staff to use in their interdisciplinary work and that enables faster innovation,” says Patterson.

THE PROBLEM

As a leading academic institution, U-M has always been deeply invested in staying at the forefront of innovation. But in the fast-developing world of IT, that’s easier said than done. With 19 schools and colleges, U-M’s IT was decentralized and non-standardized, and users were adopting third-party, consumer cloud services. Patterson sought solutions that would streamline the university’s infrastructure while empowering faculty, staff, and students to collaborate and innovate more easily.

In seeking a solution, U-M had three key requirements:

• The service would provide robust protections for institutional information.

• The service would go beyond storage and offer collaborative functionality (most consumer cloud services don’t support features like version-tracking, comments, and editing, all of which are crucial to collaborative work).

• The service would meet security and compliance requirements.

THE SOLUTION

Through the Internet2 NET+ initiative’s rigorous, peer-driven evaluation process, U-M and other institutions collaborated with Box to create a specially tailored version of the leading enterprise CCM platform.
As a result, U-M deployed NET+ Box as “M+Box” and launched it on campus. Now, NET+ Box is accessible more broadly for other R&E institutions to deploy.

Unlike the consumer solutions users had adopted (Dropbox, SkyDrive, iCloud, and SugarSync, to name a few), M+Box has the necessary security and compliance protections to keep U-M’s proprietary data secure. As a result, users can store and share many types of university-related information with M+Box. Via shared folders on Box, U-M’s researchers can interact securely and efficiently with collaborators around the world. They can share and access large media files instantly, iterate versions in a single repository, and make edits and comments as they go.

THE RESULT

• **Adoption by the campus community:** Since NET+ Box became available to University of Michigan students, faculty, and staff in spring 2012, about 50,000 users have adopted it.

• **Integration with existing technology:** U-M has also integrated Box into its learning management system, allowing users to activate Box with one click, and the faculty has requested even further integration.

• **User satisfaction:** In a survey, 19 out of 20 professors found M+Box valuable, and all 20 said that it facilitated valuable interactions among students. All 20 reported they would recommend using it in other courses.

• **Community building:** The Internet2 NET+ Box service is now generally available to all U.S. higher education institutions and has been deployed on over 100 campuses.

In addition to facilitating greater collaboration, U-M joined a nationwide community of higher education institutions that are revolutionizing cloud computing in research and education. As CIO Laura Patterson puts it, “The future is in collaboration. Being able to bring down the barriers between institutions so we can innovate faster and create new solutions. NET+ is so much more than the products in the portfolio. It’s about bringing institutions together—because at a larger scale, we’ll be able to influence our future in the cloud. None of us can do it alone.”

MORE ABOUT U-M

• University of Michigan

• M+Box