

Information Technology

Consolidating a Data Center in a Day – The Power of ‘We’

By bethanybooper on 17 March 2016 in [News & Events](#)



Thanks to thorough planning efforts and the hard work of WashU IT staff, the data center consolidation project was completed earlier than predicted.

On Feb. 27, roughly 30 WashU IT staff members successfully moved five cabinets of critical equipment from North Campus data center to the research data center on the Medical School Campus.

The move prepares WashU IT for the Integrated Infrastructure Project scheduled for completion this spring, by repositioning the system load balancing equipment.

“As we looked at how we were going to deploy that project, we noted that some of the equipment that was needed was in a different data center than where it needed to be,” said Ed Welker, executive director of shared infrastructure. “It was a cost savings because we didn’t have to buy duplicate equipment, but it also repositioned the use of the data centers.”

Project managers and staff spent two months planning the move, working to ensure that the complex system of 80 servers, 150 server instances and hundreds of cables and wires could be accurately reproduced in the new site.

“Before the move, we put five cabinets in the research data center and prewired them with power and network connections, so when we brought the servers and storage equipment we could just slide them into the racks,” Welker said.

During the planning phase, staff documented every connection on a spreadsheet and took photos of the wires before the equipment was disconnected so that they could easily recreate the connections in the new location.

“There were probably 200 network connections or interconnections – everything is very specifically connected and had to be completely reproduced,” Welker said. “It went almost perfectly. We started at 6 a.m. on Saturday and our estimated time of completion was about 24 hours. But we basically had all the equipment moved and online by 4 p.m. on Saturday which was almost 8 hours ahead of schedule.”



Outside vendors, including Dell and a private moving company, were brought in to assist with the move. John Gohsman, vice chancellor for information technology and chief information officer, ventured to campus to see the progress of the move.

WashU IT staff put in long weekend hours for the move, which included “tailgate” pizza lunch in the parking lot.

Now that the equipment is repositioned, when the Integrated Infrastructure Project rolls out in spring, the research data center will be the primary data center for that project and West Campus data center will be the backup.

“It positions us for the future. When this integrated infrastructure project comes online, everything will be in place to make that successful,” Welker said. “This was a great cross organization effort that united the different campuses together from a technical standpoint.”