

# Charter Oak State College Chooses ExaGrid over EMC Avamar for Cost and Scalability

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



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Owen Brandt  
Network Administrator  
Charter Oak State College

## Key Benefits:

- Purpose-built and cost effective
- Set-it-and-forget-it for easy management
- Scalable GRID architecture provides for fast, affordable expansion
- No forklift upgrades
- 'Fantastic' customer support

## Customer Overview

Charter Oak is a regionally accredited institution that offers a variety of options through which to complete associate's and bachelor's degrees. Degree completion at Charter Oak is more convenient and flexible – as well as more affordable – than traditional colleges. Connecticut-based Charter Oak has earned national recognition as the college that offers "degrees without boundaries." Its alumni come from all 50 states and more than a dozen countries. Since its inception in 1973, the college has helped meet the unique needs of adult learners by awarding over 11,000 degrees.

## Data Growth and Diminishing SAN Space Led to ExaGrid Solution

Charter Oak State College decided to look for a new backup target after years of backing up its virtual environment to a storage-area network.

"We had been carving out space on our SAN for backups, but as our data increased, it got to the point where we were fighting for space with production machines, and we constantly worried about space allocation," said Owen Brandt, network administrator at Charter Oak.

After briefly considering a bigger SAN, the college decided to look for a more cost-effective, purpose-built backup solution and purchased an ExaGrid system after initially looking at a solution from EMC.

"The ExaGrid system was more cost effective than EMC, and because it's a 'set-it-and-forget-it' type of solution, I don't have to spend much time managing backups or reallocating space on the SAN," said Brandt. "We were also impressed with ExaGrid's GRID architecture because it will enable us to expand the system in the future without doing a forklift upgrade," said Brandt.

ExaGrid uses a GRID-based configuration, so when the system needs to expand, additional appliance nodes are attached to the GRID, bringing with them not only additional disk

but also processing power, memory, and bandwidth. This type of configuration allows the system to maintain all the aspects of performance as the amount of data grows. In addition, as new ExaGrid appliance nodes are added to the GRID, the ExaGrid automatically load balances available capacity, maintaining a virtual pool of storage that is shared across the GRID.

## System Delivers 14:1 Data Deduplication, Disaster Recovery

Charter Oak purchased a single-site ExaGrid system and plans to add one in the future for disaster recovery. Data is backed up to the system using the college's existing backup application, Dell vRanger.

"The ExaGrid system works very well with vRanger, and we have a greater sense of security just knowing that our data is automatically backed up and protected each and every night," said Brandt. "One of the other added benefits is ExaGrid's data deduplication technology. The system is deduplicating our data at nearly 14:1, so we're able to keep plenty of data on the system in case we need to restore files."

ExaGrid combines standard compression along with zone-level data deduplication, which stores changes from backup to backup instead of storing full file copies. ExaGrid delivers extremely fast backup performance because data is written directly to disk, and data deduplication is performed post process



after the data is stored to reduce data. When a second site is used, the cost savings are even greater because ExaGrid's zone-level data deduplication technology moves only the changes from backup to backup, requiring minimal WAN bandwidth.

## Superior Manageability, Ease of Use

Brandt said that he installed the system himself and then called into ExaGrid customer support for final configuration assistance. Since then, he has established a good relationship with the ExaGrid support engineer assigned to Charter Oak's account.

"Our support engineer has been fantastic. He's extremely attentive, and he knows the ExaGrid product inside and out. If I have any questions, I'm confident that I can reach out to him and get an answer on any issue that comes up," he said.

The ExaGrid system was designed to be easy to set up and maintain, and ExaGrid's industry-leading customer support team is staffed by trained, in-house engineers who are assigned to individual accounts. The system is fully supported and was designed and manufactured for maximum uptime with redundant, hot-swappable components.

"On the whole, there's very little management or administration that needs to be done with the system. I get an email message every day telling me the status of our backup jobs and every once in a while I drill down into the web interface to check things out, but other than that, it's a 'hands off' system," Brandt said. "I really don't even have to think about backups anymore. Before, I was always worried about space allocation to the SAN and retention issues,

but now I don't have to be concerned with anything at all regarding our backups because they just run consistently each and every night."

## ExaGrid and Dell vRanger

Dell vRanger solution offers full image-level and differential backups of virtual machines to enable faster, more efficient storage and recovery of virtual machines. ExaGrid's disk-based backup systems serve as the backup target for these virtual machine images, using high-performance, post-process data deduplication to dramatically reduce the disk storage capacity required for backups versus standard disk storage.

## Intelligent Data Protection

ExaGrid's turnkey disk-based backup system combines high quality disk drives with zone-level data deduplication, delivering a disk-based solution that is far more cost effective than simply backing up to straight disk. ExaGrid's zone-level data deduplication technology stores only the changes from backup to backup instead of storing full file copies, reducing the amount of disk needed by a range of 10:1 to 50:1 or more, resulting in a solution that is 25 to 30% the cost of backing up to straight disk. The ExaGrid system is easy to install and use and works seamlessly with popular backup applications, so organizations can retain their investment in existing applications and processes. ExaGrid servers can be used at primary and secondary sites to supplement or eliminate offsite tapes with live data repositories for disaster recovery.

**For more information about ExaGrid, please visit us at [www.exagrid.com](http://www.exagrid.com) or call us at 1-800-868-6985.**

## About ExaGrid Systems, Inc.

Customers worldwide depend on ExaGrid Systems to solve their backup problems—effectively and permanently. ExaGrid's disk-based, scale-out GRID architecture adjusts to increasing backup demands due to constantly growing data volumes. It is the only solution that combines compute with capacity as well as a unique landing zone to permanently shorten backup windows and eliminate expensive forklift upgrades. Learn more at [www.exagrid.com](http://www.exagrid.com).