

## A New, State-of-the-Art, Modern Infrastructure for a Historic Institution: Inside the Hobart and William Smith Colleges Wireless Evolution.

### Challenge

#### Aging Infrastructure, Rising Stakes

The stated mission at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, a premier liberal arts institution in upstate New York, is to “prepare students to lead lives of consequence.” Helping students connect their talents and interests to meaningful, high-impact pursuits is one of their primary goals.

In the digital age, that “connection” often starts with reliable, secure Wi-Fi. For HWS, delivering that experience meant reimagining their entire digital foundation from the ground up.

But outdated network equipment, limited scalability, and tight budgets proved to be a complex challenge. With the Aruba controller software nearing end-of-life and limitations on adding new access points, the Vandis team guided the college through a seamless upgrade plan. This transition was essential to meet growing student demands, prepare for future STEM expansion, and support more devices, all in an idyllic campus setting.

“We’ve had roughly the same number of students over the last 20 years, and the number of guests on campus stays relatively stable,” says Ahsan Ahmed, Director, Enterprise Infrastructure Services for HWS. “What’s changed is the variety of devices everyone has on them. It used to be most people would have a laptop and a mobile device. Now there are laptops, cell phones, iPads, Alexa, smartwatches, PlayStations, Xbox, and much more.”

Providing secure connectivity to all those devices proved to be too much for a legacy network that simply wasn’t built to handle the new wireless demands of modern education.

“We’re in a Wi-Fi desert once you leave campus,” says Derek Lustig, Deputy CIO & CISO at HWS. “So, when students land here from around the world, it just has to work... and work flawlessly. They aren’t looking to plug in. They’re looking for seamless connectivity, entertainment, and easy-to-access academic and recreational experiences.”

That’s why HWS turned to Vandis, a trusted IT solutions provider that has earned their respect & business over the years.

“Our institution has been around for more than 200 years,” says Lustig. “When we admit students, we do so holistically—it’s not a four-year transaction. It’s a lifelong relationship. That philosophy also guides how we choose our vendors. Vandis is a true partner.”

Ahmed agrees, saying, “Our vetting process is intense. Just getting in the door, it means you have proven yourself, not just on price, but on partnership. Vandis has more than done that.”



*“When students walk into a building, Wi-Fi has to work, no excuses. They expect to be connected. That they can -  
- speaks to what we’ve built with Vandis & HPE Aruba Networking.”*

Ahsan Ahmed  
Director, Enterprise Infrastructure  
Services

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**Location**  
Geneva, New York

**Technology Solution**  
Aruba CXswitches & a full wireless  
refresh using Aruba Access Points

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## Solution

### A Strategic Forklift Migration & Wireless Refresh

Vandis led a strategic upgrade that included a forklift migration to Aruba CX switching infrastructure and a campus-wide wireless refresh. The solution included a suite of Aruba technologies that collectively improved HWS's wired infrastructure, modernized its wireless network, and enhanced both security and guest access.

"We're now investigating and articulating wireless issues at a whole new level," said Ahmed. "That's because of the maturity we've reached, thanks to Vandis."

Vandis also provides ongoing security guidance and vulnerability response, ensuring the college's evolving network environment remains secure and optimized.

"When HPE Aruba Networking releases an alert, Vandis is our go-to," Ahmed noted. "We immediately review it with our Vandis account team, ask them how our network health is, and take it from there. That advisory guidance has been invaluable."

## Results

### Seamless, Secure, and Scalable Connectivity

- Close to 100% uptime across wireless infrastructure
- No system-wide outages reported in the past academic year
- Support for a growing explosion of connected devices
- Confident onboarding of smart TVs, thermostats, consoles, and wearables

"Today's students grew up with Wi-Fi as a utility," Ahmed explained. "They expect it to just work—and it does. The fact that they can walk into a building and connect immediately speaks to what we've built."

"We used to troubleshoot getting people on the network," Lustig added. "Now it's about frictionless access while making sure they stay out of where they shouldn't be."

"I work 100% wireless. And I never have issues," said Ahmed. "We're finishing Phase 2 of our refresh. This is just part of the wireless evolution—ensuring that everywhere on campus offers that same secure, seamless experience students expect."

## What's Next

### A Partnership Built for the Long Haul

What makes the HWS and Vandis partnership work isn't just technical expertise. It's a rhythm built on trust, respect, and open communication. That trust and understanding is why Vandis isn't just a vendor—they're a trusted advisor that's already baked into what's next.

HWS is gearing up for its next evolution—a data center switch upgrade, major cybersecurity investments, and a growing STEM footprint that will shape the future of the campus.

"We're starting our third century," Ahmed shared. "This is a new era. And Vandis is part of it. Their name is already on the projects in the current and upcoming 2026 budget."

"We don't wonder if they'll be involved," he added. "We just assume they'll be there, because we count on them."