

# University Integrates Voice and Collaboration Tools in One Interface

Liberty University prepared for enrollment growth with Unified Communications Integration for Microsoft Office Communicator.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Customer Name:** Liberty University  
**Industry:** Higher Education  
**Location:** Lynchburg, Virginia  
**Size:** 12,000 residential and over 62,000 online students; 4,500 faculty and staff

### CHALLENGE

- Increase efficiency to serve more students
- Simplify collaboration for virtual teams and mobile workers
- Minimize management overhead

### SOLUTION

- Cisco Unified Communications Integration for Microsoft Office Communicator
- Click-to-call from Microsoft Office applications through Cisco Unified Communications Manager
- Cisco Collaboration suite, including Cisco WebEx, Cisco Unified Contact Center, and Cisco TelePresence

### RESULTS

- Simplified organizational communications with click-to-call capability
- Connected desktop phones and softphones to same call control system, simplifying management
- Enriched learning by adding real-time video interaction to online classes

## Challenge

Located in Lynchburg, Virginia, Liberty University is the largest private university in the state, the eighth-largest four-year university in the United States, and the largest Christian university in the world. Approximately 12,000 residential students and more than 62,000 online students study for undergraduate and graduate degrees in more than 100 majors.

Enrollment has grown by 20 percent or more annually for four years. Although residential enrollment is currently capped at 12,000, Liberty plans to continue expanding its online program. "To continue providing excellent service to more students, we'll need better processes and more automation," says Connie Allison, IT liaison for Liberty University.

Communications and collaboration tools are especially important because the campus is

expanding to more locations. As a result, faculty and staff are increasingly mobile, and some even work out of state.

For many years, the university has used Cisco® collaboration solutions such as Cisco Unified Communications, Cisco TelePresence® systems, and Cisco WebEx®. In addition, approximately 2,000 employees use Microsoft Office Communicator for presence and instant messaging, while the 500 Mac OS users on campus enjoy similar capabilities from Cisco Unified Personal Communicator.

"Our staff is already familiar with Microsoft Office Communicator for presence and instant messaging, so keeping the same interface while adding click-to-call made the Cisco integration very popular."

— Matthew Fleming, Manager of Network Services, Liberty University

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The university IT staff saw an opportunity to simplify organizational communications by providing a single interface for presence, instant messaging, and Cisco Unified Communications and video solutions. “We wanted employees to be able to escalate from chat to a voice, video, or web conferencing call with a click instead of picking up the phone to place a separate call,” says Matthew Fleming, manager of network services for Liberty University.

## Solution

Liberty University now provides a single, easy-to-use interface for all campus voice and collaboration tools, using Cisco UC Integration™ for Microsoft Office Communicator. Faculty and staff use the familiar Microsoft Office Communicator interface to simply click to initiate a voice, video, or web conference or check voicemail. The software is included at no extra cost with Cisco Unified Workspace Licensing, which Liberty had already purchased. To date, approximately 2,000 faculty and staff use Cisco UC Integration for Microsoft Office Communicator.

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— Tirian Wilson, Voice Engineer, Liberty University

“Cisco Unified Communications Integration for Microsoft Office Communicator is the cleanest way to integrate our existing Cisco and Microsoft communications tools, and also easiest to support,” says Tirian Wilson, voice engineer for Liberty University. “Providing call control through Microsoft Office Communications Server would have meant supporting two call control systems and developing scripts to share changes between the two systems. The Cisco integration eliminated that complexity.”

Liberty also takes advantage of other Cisco Unified Communications capabilities for efficient organizational communications among employees on the main campus, virtual teams, and mobile employees:

- **Click-to-call from customer relationship management (CRM) software:** The university’s IT department added click-to-call capabilities to the Microsoft Dynamics CRM software used by the Office of Promotional Publications call center. “Click-to-call is faster than manual dialing and eliminates dialing errors, helping to increase agent productivity,” says Wilson.
- **Cisco Unified Contact Center Express:** The ease of adding self-service options has enabled the university to serve more students, with the same excellent service levels, without increasing staffing. The university has more than 20 contact centers. The Residential Enrollment Office, for example, uses interactive voice response (IVR) and database lookups to route callers to the most appropriate person. Cisco Unified Contact Center Express provides queuing with message playback, and each contact center can customize the messages callers hear while on hold.

- **Cisco WebEx:** Graduate psychology students doing their semester-long internships meet weekly with other students and the professor on Cisco WebEx. "Video brings everyone together, and the professor asks questions, giving the session a collaborative classroom feel," says Wilson. The School of Religion uses Cisco WebEx for faculty meetings, and then emails a link to the recording to dozens of other faculty. "We just open the link and click the playback button to hear and see everything that went on during the meeting, including presentations and video," says Allison.
- **Cisco TelePresence systems:** An IT employee who lives out of state participates in daily telepresence sessions with coworkers using a Cisco TelePresence Set-Top 770. "Being able to see his facial expressions and gestures leads to better understanding, especially if we're meeting to agree on a new purchase or opportunity," says Fleming. During the meeting, all participants join a Cisco WebEx session to share their desktops. Liberty staff also use Cisco TelePresence technology for meetings with other universities. "The fact that the Cisco TelePresence system supports common voice protocols (H.323 and SIP) and video protocols (H.262 or H.264) gives us a lot of flexibility," says Fleming.
- **Use of smartphones for campus voice services:** Cisco Unified Communications Manager supports Session Initiation Protocol (SIP), also used by Nokia and Android smartphones. Therefore, Liberty faculty and staff can use these smartphones to access university voice and voicemail services.

"Today's students expect more online services and more options to interact with university personnel. We do not necessarily know what new needs are around the corner, and the Cisco Unified Communications and Cisco Unified Contact Center solutions give us the flexibility to adapt."

— Connie Allison, IT Liaison, Liberty University

## Results

### Simpler Collaboration within Virtual Teams

Having a single interface for Microsoft Office Communicator and Cisco Unified Communications helps staff work more efficiently with coworkers on and off campus. "Our staff is already familiar with Microsoft Office Communicator for presence and instant messaging, so keeping the same interface while adding click-to-call made the Cisco integration very popular," says Fleming. Click-to-call also works with other Microsoft applications, such as Excel and Outlook, so some staff members have created Excel spreadsheets with their frequently dialed numbers. Staff who work off campus have the same capabilities, and can connect easily to the campus network using the Cisco AnyConnect™ VPN Client.

"Being able to receive calls anywhere, with any device, is the single biggest benefit of Cisco Unified Communications at Liberty University," says Wilson. The highly mobile IT team, for example, uses the single number reach feature to make their cell phones act like Cisco Unified IP Phones when they are on campus. "Calls to the office ring my smartphone," says Fleming. "And if I take a call while I'm walking to my office, I can transfer the call to my desk phone when I get there."

## Low Management Overhead

"Cisco Unified Communications Integration for Microsoft Office Communicator is much easier to manage than other approaches we considered," says Wilson. One reason is that a single call control system, Cisco Unified Communications Manager, connects both softphones and physical phones. Another is that the IT team does not have to manually install the client on university laptops and PCs. Instead, they wrote a program that finds new client devices on the network and then installs the software automatically. "Our users don't have to take any action, and neither does the IT team," Wilson says.

## Agility to Meet New Requirements

With its open design and ease of integration with products from other vendors, Cisco Unified Communications gives Liberty University the flexibility to adjust to evolving needs. These include staff increases, more online learning, an expanding campus, and more remote workers. "In addition, today's students expect more online services and more options to interact with university personnel," says Allison. "We do not necessarily know what new needs are around the corner, and Cisco Unified Communications and Cisco Unified Contact Center solutions give us the flexibility to adapt."

| PRODUCT LIST   |
|--|
| <b>Collaboration, Voice, and Video</b>   |
| <b>Voice and Unified Communications</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cisco Unified Communications Manager</li><li>• Cisco Unified IP Phones 8900 and 7900 Series</li><li>• Cisco Unified Wireless IP Phone 7920, 7921, and 7925 for residential directors and mobile workers</li><li>• Cisco VG224 and VG248 Analog Voice Gateways</li><li>• Cisco Unified Personal Communicator</li><li>• Cisco Unified Workspace Licensing<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Cisco UC Integration for Microsoft Office Communicator</li><li>◦ Cisco Unity® Unified Messaging</li><li>◦ Cisco Unified Presence</li><li>◦ Cisco Unified Contact Center Express</li></ul></li></ul> |
| <b>TelePresence</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cisco TelePresence Set-Top 770</li></ul>   |
| <b>WebEx</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cisco WebEx Meeting Center</li></ul>   |

## Next Steps

Liberty has more ideas for using Cisco Unified Communications to support enrollment growth. One is consolidating the 12 servers used for Cisco Unified Communications to a single Cisco Unified Computing System™ with Cisco UCS B-Series Blade Servers. Cisco Unified Contact Center Express on Cisco UCS blade servers can support 100 more simultaneous sessions, for a total of 400. In addition, server consolidation will also reduce data center space, power, and cooling requirements, helping the university minimize its carbon footprint.

To further improve service to students, the IT team is considering upgrading to Cisco Unified Contact Center Enterprise to take advantage of the universal queuing feature and integration with Cisco SocialMiner. Currently, university staff members watch social computing sites such as Facebook and Twitter to respond to comments and suggestions about the university. "With SocialMiner, we can automatically find comments right after they are posted, and route them to an agent to respond on the same medium," Allison

says. For example, a student who asked a question about financial aid on Facebook would quickly receive a response on Facebook.

## For More Information

To find out more about Cisco Collaboration, visit: <http://www.cisco.com/go/collaboration>.

To join conversations and share best practices about collaboration, visit: <http://www.cisco.com/go/joinconversation>.

To read more about Liberty University, visit: <http://www.liberty.edu>.



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Printed in USA

C36-686770-00 09/11