Business School Launches Interactive Classroom of the Future

The Darla Moore School of Business uses Cisco TelePresence to bring the world to its business education programs.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DARLA MOORE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

- **Industry:** Education
- **Location:** Columbia, South Carolina, United States

CHALLENGE

- Create multi-modal learning environment and change the way students learn
- Find cost-effective ways to leverage professor resources
- Bring global experiences and world-class subject-matter experts to students

SOLUTION

- Cisco TelePresence, Cisco WebEx, Cisco Media Experience Engine
- Cisco Prepare, Planning & Design, Implementation Services

RESULTS

- Delivered powerful learning experience between students and corporate partners
- Reduces travel abroad and associated costs
- Supports multimodal teaching goals

Challenge

The Darla Moore School of Business at the University of South Carolina is known for its outstanding leadership in international business education and research. Since 1997, the school's undergraduate major in international business has been ranked No. 1 in that specialty. Its International Master of Business Administration program has been ranked No. 1 or No. 2 for 20 consecutive years by *U.S. News & World Report*. In 2009, the *Financial Times* of London ranked the school's MBA programs at No. 38 among U.S. universities. Nearly 4000 undergraduate students and 800 graduate students are enrolled in nine undergraduate concentrations, seven master's programs, and two Ph.D. programs.

When Ray Smith, Associate Dean of the Executive Education program, joined the administration in 2008, he brought a strong background in international business and a passion for using virtual learning and working with global teams. The Moore School's international focus and reputation have been built over many years on faculty traveling overseas to teach and build relationships with colleagues and through international student internship experiences. However, the time and cost of travel take their toll on individuals and budgets.

Smith's vision is to bring globally distributed students and world-class subject-matter experts, such as corporate executives and business school faculty in other countries, into business education programs. He intends to create virtual live classroom experiences, no matter where students or faculty are on the planet. In this environment, participants will learn together, talk with, and see each other as they are led by faculty from the Moore School and partner schools to create connections between people, ideas, practice, cultures, and experience.

A "multi-modal," highly interactive environment would enable faculty to use the optimal teaching mode (whether it is classroom lecture, audio conferencing, video, Second Life virtual worlds, blogging or other means) for a particular learning activity. This environment could also potentially reduce costs and share professors' expertise across many locations simultaneously. More importantly, it could link the community of learning, including faculty, students, and their work places, together in a rich learning environment.

In the past, the school's professional MBA program had used satellite for broadcasting some courses. However, the people receiving the broadcasts could not interact with the professor or class members who were physically in the room with the professor. Each class of students had a distinctly different experience.

"We want students who may be at a distance to be able to take full advantage of learning opportunities anywhere, without feeling 'remote' or at a distance from other members of their class," says Smith. "I had seen telepresence solutions and was amazed at how well students could quickly make the emotional and psychological connection with each other. However, rather than putting telepresence technology in the classroom, I envisioned putting the class inside a telepresence experience."

> "I see TelePresence as a first step towards creating a live, interactive global classroom. It brings together business schools, students, corporate partners, researchers, and others, and will be an integral part of business education going forward."
>
> **– Ray Smith, Associate Dean, Executive Education**

Solution

Smith set about investigating options for creating the type of multimodal teaching environment he envisioned. He chose Cisco TelePresence™ and Cisco WebEx® solutions, as well as Cisco® Planning & Design and Implementation Services. The implementation was the beginning of a long-term, consultative partnership between the University and Cisco. Cisco Services talent, tools, and processes provided the framework for facilitating the implementation for the current project but also to establish a developmental relationship to keep the school at the leading edge of development and practice.

"The technology is outstanding, but it was the quality of the Cisco team that made my decision," he says. "The quality of relationship was superb. The Cisco team was interested in solving problems and making things happen. Their imagination and our shared mission actually made the experience fun."

The Moore School's Cisco TelePresence implementation used standard, off-the-shelf systems and required only minimal audiovisual integration. Because University buildings cannot be redesigned to accommodate TelePresence units, the Cisco team created a global learning portal that looks exactly like the front of the classroom but linked to many other classrooms around the world as if they were all in one classroom. Cisco Services delivered a network planning and design activity to help ensure that the circuit going to the classroom had the proper quality-of-service (QoS) settings to optimize the quality of the TelePresence experience.

A second challenge required working late evenings and weekends. Most TelePresence conferencing systems are designed with business meetings in mind, where attendees sit around a table. However, in the university, professors typically stand and move around during class or speak standing at a lectern. Because a Cisco TelePresence unit had never been deployed to accommodate speakers who stand and move about the stage, Cisco Services partnered with Smith to find a solution. They raised the units and reoriented the cameras to accommodate standing presentations and to enable the video cameras to follow movement.

The Cisco team also recently finished integrating Cisco WebEx with the TelePresence classroom so that it can be used in the course structure. The Cisco Media Experience Engine provides comprehensive live and video on demand transcoding services, so that video content can be shared across the network and delivered to virtually any type of endpoint device. A web-based user interface and innovative post-production features and speech-to-text transcription services will enhance the Moore School's ability to create rich collaboration experiences and a true multimodal learning environment.

Results

Although Cisco TelePresence was not originally designed for large college auditoriums, it performed flawlessly. Everyone can see, hear, and talk, even from the back row. Every participant sees the classroom the way that they expect, whether as a student seated in a tiered seat or the professor standing in front of the class.

The Moore School operated its first live session with Professor Tim Carroll's Organization Design class. During class, students were connected with executives from NBC Universal in New York, who were using NBC's TelePresence unit. Class teams presented findings and recommendations from their Action Learning projects that they have been working on for NBC Universal.

"The TelePresence technology opens up the possibility to bring executives and students together," says Professor Carroll. "Today our students were speaking with a group of NBC execs at 30 Rock in New York City. On Thursday, they will present to Cisco executives in three different cities. Our students are working with real executives on real projects that will have real impact. That learning experience is very powerful, and Cisco TelePresence enables it to happen."

The Moore School's TelePresence solution can also be replicated easily, because it is a standardized solution without custom integration. It is also broadly useful. Faculty and administrators also use the TelePresence classroom for meetings and joint research studies with corporate partners. Faculty who have used TelePresence are highly enthusiastic about the solution and are actively seeking opportunities to use it.

PRODUCT LIST

Voice, Video, and IP Communications
- Cisco TelePresence 3010
- Cisco TelePresence 1300
- Cisco WebEx
- Cisco WebEx application for iPhone
- Cisco WebEx application for iPad
- Cisco Media Experience Engine

Next Steps

Smith sees numerous opportunities for integrating the TelePresence classroom experience into courses for undergraduates and graduate students to transform the learning environment.

"I see TelePresence as a first step towards creating a live, interactive global classroom," says Smith. "It brings together business schools, students, corporate partners, researchers, and others, and will be an integral part of business education going forward."

For More Information

To find out more about Cisco Services, visit: www.cisco.com/go/services.

To learn more about the Darla Moore School of Business, visit http://mooreschool.sc.edu.

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