

University Extends Collaboration beyond Campus Walls

Customer Case Study



Wake Forest University elevates student-faculty engagement with schoolwide license for Cisco collaboration tools.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: Wake Forest University

Industry: Higher Education

Location: Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Number of Employees: 1500 faculty and staff

Number of Students: 7000

Challenge:

- Foster increased collaboration and interaction within and beyond university walls
- Implement universitywide collaboration infrastructure with reliable security and flexibility
- Accommodate increased mobility and reliance on mobile devices

Solution:

- Cisco WebEx technology allows face-to-face learning between students and teachers in different locations
- Cisco Jabber enhances collaboration with instant messaging and presence
- Cisco TelePresence delivers in-person experience through immersive, high-definition video

Results:

- Extended teaching and learning wherever faculty, students, and guest lecturers are located
- Maximized student-faculty interaction
- Transformed learning environment by integrating mobility into daily academic life

Challenge

Founded in 1834, Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina claims the distinction of being the nation's premier collegiate university, consistently ranked among the top 25 universities in the country. The university offers the personal attention of a small liberal arts college, combined with the breadth and global relevancy of a leading research institution. Today, the university has 8500 students, staff, and faculty.

Central to Wake Forest's mission is the forging of rich relationships between students and faculty, emphasizing heightened interaction to elevate university standards of higher education. The university eschews the traditional practice of simply transferring content from teacher to student for a level of engagement that challenges students to develop and employ critical thinking. Toward this end, Wake Forest has consistently sought out innovative technological solutions, being among the first schools to give laptops to all of its students back in 1996.

More recently, however, the university found its spirit of engagement tested by the shifting cultural, logistical, and technological trends toward mobility. Many Wake Forest students and faculty are increasingly off-site, engaging in study abroad opportunities, community service projects, or athletics. This trend meant that a large community needed a new way to engage fully in university life.

"Our students are a very mobile group, with many required to travel regularly throughout the semester as part of the 'go there' experience here at Wake Forest," says Rick Matthews, associate provost for technology and information systems and chief information officer at the university. Matthews and the rest of the Wake Forest team were tasked with launching a technology initiative that could amplify teaching and learning while also linking students and researchers across campus and the globe. "We want our students to be fully engaged even when they're not on campus," Matthew says. "We saw this mandate as an opportunity to ensure all of our students get full advantage of their professors and classes no matter where we've asked them to go."



“This is a collaborative world, and Cisco technology allows us to participate fully in the conversation. We’re driving the future of teaching and learning, and Cisco is taking us to the next level.”

Nancy Crouch
Deputy Chief Information Officer
Wake Forest University

Solution

The Wake Forest team was initially intent on a desktop video solution. After getting a firsthand look at Cisco WebEx® Meeting Center and its collaborative features, including high-quality video, desktop-sharing, mobility, and robust security, they knew that Cisco was the obvious choice. “It was nearly unanimous among pilot participants that we needed WebEx,” says Nancy Crouch, Wake Forest University’s deputy CIO, noting a 90 percent satisfaction rating. “Faculty and staff saw a lot of opportunity to use WebEx and Jabber in their roles. And the students were so enthusiastic that some went out and trialed additional Cisco collaboration products and asked for those, too.”

Expanding Learning Opportunities with Collaboration Technology

Wake Forest is the first university in the world to unite every member of the extended class community with a site-wide license for Cisco® WebEx Meeting Center. In addition to using the entire WebEx solution suite, which includes Cisco WebEx Support Center, Cisco WebEx Event Center, and Cisco WebEx Training Center, the school also provides Cisco Jabber™ for instant messaging. “A recurring indictment we keep hearing from the business community is that colleges do not prepare students for the teamwork they’ll be part of out in the real world,” says Matthews. “Since WebEx and Jabber are professional collaborative tools, we feel we’re equipping our graduates with the tools they need to be part of a 21st-century workforce.”

Wake Forest’s use of WebEx continues to grow, as staff members find new ways to perform day-to-day tasks more efficiently. For example, client support staff find it easier to address technical issues using WebEx Support Center. One support analyst says, “One morning, I fixed six computers without leaving my office. Whether someone is across the hall or across town, we can work collaboratively to troubleshoot the problem without physically having to bring the system in, which is a huge boost in our productivity.”

In the educational setting, students and teachers are also uncovering interesting uses for Cisco technology: a judge using WebEx to address a group of students “in chambers”; students using Jabber to instant message with faculty for less formal situations; and even a preference for WebEx in classes where everyone is physically present because they found the technology helpful for viewing presentations and document annotations up close.

Although the university has used a free instant messaging solution, says Crouch, “Cisco Jabber takes the function of presence indicators one step further by automatically changing your status. When you can take full advantage of this feature, there’s no need to manually change it to ‘unavailable,’ or ‘in a meeting,’ which is very convenient.” The fact that it’s available on Windows, Mac, and so many mobile devices is an added benefit for students and faculty who are constantly on the go. To simplify and accelerate the deployment, Wake Forest chose to deploy Jabber with Cisco cloud-based presence and IM service.

To reduce complexity in its IT infrastructure, Wake Forest is considering replacing its legacy private branch exchange (PBX) phone system with Cisco Unified Communications as well. This way, the university has an end-to-end solution that unifies the network and its applications into a converged IP network.



Boosting University's Presence through Video

Cisco TelePresence® has taken Wake Forest's original video expectations to the next level with an immersive, high-definition, in-person experience. Excitement to use the technology began during the team's first TelePresence demonstration, when one participant gave a wink that everyone caught. "When we saw the subtlety of that wink come to life, we knew we were seeing something special," says Matthews. "Those subtleties don't come across like that in standard definition. The only other place you see that is in real life."

Wake Forest uses Cisco TelePresence to reach out to university resources, corporate partners, and alumni worldwide. TelePresence sites are in the university library as well as in some classrooms, with plans for future expansion.

Results

Cisco collaboration tools have surpassed expectations, transforming Wake Forest's network into a cohesive platform that enables students and faculty to engage in meaningful interactions wherever they may be, and in new and unusual ways that encourage critical thinking and innovation. Rather than reduce the quality of communication, as Wake Forest initially feared, the technology has led to greater interaction. For example, with the higher availability and exposure that faculty and students can get through WebEx, office hours now take place via WebEx or Jabber at times more conducive to student and faculty schedules.

"Wake in Motion" is what Crouch calls it, a philosophy that highlights the university's ongoing push to keep Wake Forest in the forefront. "We are looking at how to leverage our resources and eliminate any obstacles to collaboration. Because, let's face it, this is a collaborative world, and Cisco technology allows us to participate fully in the conversation. We're driving the future of teaching and learning, and Cisco is taking us to the next level."

Thanks to Cisco Jabber and WebEx, students and faculty now have a new-found sense of mobility. Using their school-issued laptop or their own personal mobile device, they can join classes and meetings from wherever, whenever, and on whatever device, fostering greater collaboration, and a more enriching teaching and learning experience. For example, an athlete sitting in an airport en route to an away game can join a campus event via smartphone or tablet. Or if a professor is called out of town the first week of class, with WebEx, he or she can still begin the semester with students. In addition, Wake Forest's student government president can meet regularly with 99 other student government presidents from around the country, leveraging face-to-face video interaction that helps build lasting and meaningful rapport.

"Cisco collaboration tools allow us to spark a conversation wherever we are in the world and collaborate the way humans are meant to, which is person-to-person," says Crouch. "We have only scratched the surface of what this infrastructure can do. The possibilities are limitless."



Next Steps

Wake Forest intends to continue its deployment of a comprehensive Cisco collaboration infrastructure, which includes the installment of more Cisco TelePresence sites and a pilot for integrating Cisco Unity® Connection with Gmail. Additionally, the university plans to create integrated collaborative workspaces, and is evaluating Cisco Show and Share® for webcasting, video sharing, and video analytics.

Wake Forest is especially interested in using video capture to make academic resources available across campus and beyond, ultimately changing the classroom from a one-directional content delivery environment to an experience where topics are truly applied, challenged, and learned.

For More Information

- To find out more about Cisco collaboration, visit: www.cisco.com/go/collaboration.
- To read more collaboration success stories, go to: www.cisco.com/go/collaborationcasestudies.
- To find out more about Cisco TelePresence, visit: www.cisco.com/go/telepresence.
- To join conversations and share best practices about collaboration, visit: www.cisco.com/go/joinconversation.

Product List

Collaboration Solutions

Collaboration Applications

- Cisco WebEx
 - Cisco WebEx Meeting Center
 - Cisco WebEx Training Center
 - Cisco WebEx Event Center
 - Cisco WebEx Support Center
- Cisco Jabber on Windows, Mac, and mobile devices
- Cisco WebEx Connect presence and IM service

Unified Communications

- Cisco Unified Communications Platform
 - Cisco Unified Communications Manager
- Cisco Unified Messaging
 - Cisco Unity Connection

Telepresence

- Cisco TelePresence Endpoints
 - Personal Experience
 - Cisco TelePresence System 500 Series
 - Solutions Experience
 - Cisco TelePresence System Integrator C Series (C40, C60, C90)



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