

Coastal Bend College Deploys Expanded Video Learning Technology



Video conferencing from Cisco enables distance learning for students across multiple locations, greater access to faculty across locations.

Executive Summary

COASTAL BEND COLLEGE

- **Industry:** Education
- **Location:** Texas
- **Number of Students:** 3700

CHALLENGE

- Need to support greater course offering to multiple locations
- Desire to reduce costs for students and faculty associated with travel
- Expand offerings to more students, provide dual enrollment at high schools in surrounding areas

SOLUTION

- Upgraded videoconferencing systems
- Added teleconference bridge to accommodate more virtual classrooms

RESULTS

- Increased number of distance-learning sites
- Increased course availability and offerings
- Expanded reach of dual-enrollment programs by adding (multiconnection) "room"

Challenge

Coastal Bend College, a rural Texas college that spans across one main campus and three branch sites, serves the educational needs of its community members. With a student body of 3700, Coastal Bend College strives to prepare students for continued education and the workforce, offering hundreds of academic courses that are transferable to most four-year institutions as well as technical and vocational training.

Managing this variety of class offerings and securing the right faculty to accommodate students across four sites is a top concern, and has the potential to be an expensive undertaking.

Coastal Bend College was faced with the need to accommodate its student body in a way that was feasible for its faculty with an economical solution that did not diminish the quality of the learning experience. Across the school's four sites, a handful of students in each location might register for a course, leaving the class enrollment scattered. Offering the class in each location was not a possibility due to the major faculty commitments and cost that would be associated with professors' travel between the sites.

Coastal Bend College also had to meet its commitment to the broader community. The college works with area high schools to offer dual-enrollment courses to students, but their current video capabilities limited the number of schools that could access the resources. Some of the schools are as far as 30 miles from the sites, so travel time and costs for students to attend lectures in person were burdensome, and at times not possible.

The college did have some videoconferencing capabilities in place, but the rooms that were established were burdened to fill the needs of academic courses, technical training courses, faculty administrative meetings, and safety trainings. Coastal Bend College recognized the potential to meet its needs through video, but was underequipped to keep up with the high demand for distance-learning options.

Solution

The goals for Coastal Bend College were three-fold: address the learning and accessibility issues presented by scattered student and faculty base, reduce the burden of travel for students and professors, and expand the reach of programs and educators. The college, which previously received a grant to deploy Tandberg solutions, now a part of Cisco, evaluated videoconferencing options and found that Cisco TelePresence® offered those capabilities and matched the technology goals of the school.

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“Thanks to the added videoconferencing capabilities, we are now able to realize our vision of a robust virtual learning program that serves the needs of all Coastal Bend stakeholders. Students benefit from more courses and scheduling options, faculty gains the ability to interact with students remotely, staff enjoys flexibility to complete training and safety obligations, and local youth gain access to advanced course material that would otherwise not have been available.”

Jennifer Keels, Director of IT Services,
Coastal Bend College

Cisco® TelePresence is an innovative, web-based videoconferencing solution. The technology integrates high-definition cameras, microphones, speakers, and lighting, and is designed to help enable virtual meetings as if individuals in physically-separated sites are sitting in the same room.

With an added bridge and videoconferencing systems, Coastal Bend College is able to offer more distance-learning classes, filling the rooms every Monday through Thursday from morning into the evening. On Fridays, the virtual rooms are used to address administrative needs, maintenance, and safety training for staff.

“Thanks to the added videoconferencing capabilities, we are now able to realize our vision of a robust virtual learning program that serves the needs of all Coastal Bend stakeholders,” says Jennifer Keels, Director of IT services at Coastal Bend College. “Students benefit from more courses and scheduling options, faculty gains the ability to interact with students remotely, staff enjoys flexibility to complete training and safety obligations, and local youth gain access to advanced course material that would otherwise not have been available.”

Previously, faculty and staff were forced to travel, sometimes from locations as far as 60 miles away to attend meetings with their department, college president, or even to attend a training or safety seminar. Now faculty can participate from afar, saving time and money, and offering greater flexibility to fulfill these obligations.

The added video conferencing room allowed Coastal Bend College to expand its reach to local high schools, offering access to college-level material for a large economically disadvantaged population. A Rural Utility Service (RUS) matching grant helped fund the purchase of 10 mini videoconferencing units, which Coastal Bend College and surrounding high schools leveraged to offer three to six dual-credit classes each semester. A secondary round of technology and upgrades to existing rooms were funded through Title V.

In addition to providing an academic benefit to the high schools, the videoconferencing offers a safer alternative to long car rides to and from campus. Now high school students are able to stay off the road and participate in college courses directly from their high schools.

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Product List

Video

- Cisco TelePresence

Results

Studies have shown that videoconferencing classes are more effective than basic web lectures, and with the deployment of more robust videoconferencing, Coastal Bend College is able to reach students remotely while maintaining a high quality of education.

The benefits of the videoconferencing expansion reach beyond the college and provided benefits to the greater community by enabling options to provide dual-enrollment offerings to high schools in the surrounding area that might otherwise not have access to advanced curriculum.

For faculty and staff, videoconferencing capabilities mean administrative, training, and safety meetings can be done remotely. Now faculty and staff can stay up to date regardless of their location, staying connected to colleagues and the latest initiatives remotely, saving time and money on travel. Further, the flexibility means Coastal Bend College can accommodate professors' schedules and feature guest lecturers from schools across the country.

More "rooms" allow lessons to be shot from different locations and offer both college faculty and guest lecturers greater flexibility and access to students. Since the deployment, Coastal Bend College has broadcast video to Mexico, helped stream teacher-student meetings from Jamaica to the United States, and has partnered with a sister school in Mexico City to bolster its Spanish program.

Coastal Bend College has also used videoconferencing for meetings with congressional representatives. Coastal Bend College participates and has even facilitated a quarterly grants workshop for Congressman Cuellar's office on numerous grant topics. The videoconferencing was streamed to multiple locations throughout the congressman's region to share information with the community with limited travel. Coastal Bend College has also served as a videoconferencing site for the Eagle Ford Consortium, a group of state and local leaders and businesses interested in sharing information and opportunities/challenges.

The deployment offers convenience and cost savings to students, which may attract students for future programs. The college is hoping to leverage the virtual classrooms in the future to offer classes that cater to the region's shale and oil and gas industries.

For More Information

To find out more about the Cisco video solutions, go to:
<http://www.cisco.com/go/video>.

