

North Carolina College Protects Students, Faculty, and Staff with IP Telephony

Vance-Granville Community College installed Cisco Unified Communications to enhance ease of communication across campus.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

VANCE-GRANVILLE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

- Higher Education
- Henderson, North Carolina
- 4,790 teachers, faculty and students

EDUCATION CHALLENGE

- Need to upgrade outdated equipment
- Leverage existing network infrastructure to deploy notification service that reaches all students during emergency

SOLUTION

- Implement Cisco Unified Communications with third-party applications
- Deploy latest Cisco telephones to allow for video capabilities

RESULTS

- Improved communication capabilities to major stakeholders through notification system
- Increased campus awareness of safety concerns or major events
- Managed communications across hundreds of miles

Education Challenge

Vance Granville Community College (VGCC) has four campuses located in Vance, Granville, Franklin, and Warren counties in North Carolina. VGCC offers more than 40 curriculum programs, in which students work toward certificates, diplomas, and degrees. For the convenience of students, classes are scheduled during the day, at night, and online. While providing students with a flexible learning environment, VGCC wanted to help ensure that its students were safe on their campuses at all times.

VGCC is built on a framework that encourages collaboration among the different campuses to make higher education accessible and beneficial to the largest number of individuals possible. As such, VGCC had long considered implementing a comprehensive notification service to alert all campuses quickly in the event of emergencies,

power outages, severe weather, and the like. However, officials felt that installing this type of solution would not be cost-effective or efficient for such a large organization as VGCC, which covers four North Carolina counties and has a service area roughly the size of Rhode Island.

“Our old phone system was outdated,” says Dr. Ken Lewis, vice president of IT for VGCC.

“Basically, it offered a dial tone. After the recent tragedies at schools across the country, colleges became aware of a critical need to create a crisis alert process for students, faculty, and staff.

Process management became a key element to creating a lockdown system on campus. We were also looking to move to voice over IP to improve the ease of use and management across all four campuses. My team wanted everyone on one phone system rather than four.”

Solution

VGCC had installed the latest network infrastructure featuring state-of-the art technology including Cisco Nexus®; this backbone enabled VGCC to take advantage of its network’s scalability and upgrade its IP telephony. VGCC installed Cisco® Unified Communications and is taking advantage of the third-party applications that come with Unified Communications, including video, panic buttons, 911 Alert and paging. All VGCC’s campuses now have IP prevalence.

The Staff likes the video applications and the 911 notifications to our security team making them feel safer with it around,” says Dr. Lewis. “Improved safety was one of the key goals when we

decided to upgrade our IP telephony. We added panic buttons to all college areas, which send out text messages and emails to our security staff, and then they follow up to make sure everything is okay. In addition, we receive text messages and phone alerts when someone dials 911. These events also display on the security team's phones to ensure all avenues of communication is made."

VGCC deployed a number of IP telephony solutions that significantly enhance the life of its employees and students including Cisco CallManager and Cisco Unity® Voicemail. Before the upgrade, some faculty and staff did not have standard voicemail. Today, through Cisco Unity Voicemail, they can check their voicemail traditionally or via a webbrowser. VGCC is using the dial-out function of Cisco CallManager. When the college has a major event or deadline coming up, the IT team creates the dial-out language and programs the specific time to execute. The IT team can also determine how many ports the dial-out component will use so that they do not restrict all of its access ports during this time.

VGCC was also very interested in third-party applications that leverage Unified Communications. The IT team decided to upgrade all phones so they could utilize the IP speakers and the IPCelerate product. The Ipcelerate product, Ipsessions, works with the Cisco CallManager to page students, teachers, or specific areas around the campuses. In addition, VGCC added IP speakers to the hallways so they can notify students of a crisis event regardless of their location, not just in the classrooms or over the phone.

"We upgraded our Unified Communications to the latest version so all of our campuses could begin using the latest features," says Dr. Lewis. "Some new special features include the ability for CallManager to receive faxes and reroute them to our email. This helps us protect our students, faculty, and staff members' identities when they contain red flag personal data, ie when dealing with financial aid applications and such things."

VGCC is has also distributed 30 wireless IP phones, which is an excellent way to provide communication for housekeepers, security guards, and other staff members who do not have offices and move around the school. This capability allows them to be in constant communication with all other VGCC staff.

"Our Cisco solution helps keep our students, faculty, and staff safer, because it has allowed us to build a plan that works, thanks to our IP telephony solution."

— Dr. Ken Lewis , Vice President of Information Technology, Vance-Granville Community College (VGCC)

Results

"Our Cisco solution helps keep our students, faculty, and staff safer, because it has allowed us to build a plan that works, thanks to our IP telephony solution," says Dr. Lewis. "We set up several routing menus through the CallManager, which helps our students get the information they need quicker. Students are willing to use the technology."

The cameras on VGCC's new phones help students at different campuses speak face-to-face with staff members located on other campuses. For example, VGCC has students who take courses at multiple campuses, and this solution allows them to talk with counselors and program heads who are located on other campuses.

PRODUCT LIST

Voice and IP Communications

- Cisco Unified Communications
- Cisco Unity Voicemail
- Cisco CallManager
- Cisco IP Phones

“CallManager and IPCelerate help us communicate with students in case of inclement weather or some other emergency,” says Dr. Lewis. “This allows us to get them the necessary information faster. In addition, the IPSessions product has roughly 30 applications that we use to benefit students. This ranges from zone paging to video surveillance

integrated into our Call Manager.”

VGCC appreciated that the IT team was able to purchase all necessary products, such as Unified Communications and applications, including Unity Voicemail, from Cisco. “It is easy to train IT staff on different systems because we are a one-stop Cisco shop, which means that most people already know how to use the technology,” says Dr. Lewis. Additionally, when you start grouping all of our Cisco solutions into one infrastructure, redundancy is easier, which means that our system is always stable and functioning.”

For More Information

To find out more about the Cisco Unified Communications, go to: <http://www.cisco.com/go/uc>



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