University Expands Academic Offerings with Technology–Driven Collaboration

Florida A&M University deploys Cisco video solutions to support emerging
College of Pharmacy satellite school

Executive Summary

Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU)
- **Industry:** Higher Education
- **Location:** Tallahassee, Florida
- **Number of Students:** 15,000
- **Number of Faculty/Staff:** 1,000

CHALLENGE
- Desire to expand academic offerings
- Lack of funding to staff new satellite College of Pharmacy campus
- Need to meet academic requirements set by college accreditation board

SOLUTION
- Deploy Cisco TelePresence solutions to enable real-time voice and video collaboration to connect FAMU campuses

RESULTS
- Achieved high success rates by pharmacy students at satellite campus
- Significant cost savings on staffing satellite campus

Challenge

Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) is a public university located in Tallahassee, Florida. With nearly 15,000 students and 1,000 faculty and staff, FAMU has nine academic schools and colleges, offering degrees in a diverse set of programs, including computer science, education, engineering, physics and pharmaceutical sciences.

With satellite campuses around the state of Florida, FAMU noticed an opportunity to extend its College of Pharmacy offerings to Crestview, one of Florida's fastest growing cities. Located in the state's rural western panhandle, Crestview was facing a lack of pharmacists in the region, and FAMU realized a pharmacy school within the city could help to address the issue.

However, in planning for the Crestview campus, the university realized that it did not have the necessary funds needed to staff the program. Additionally, FAMU faced pressure from the college accreditation board to show that its Crestview students would not be at a disadvantage while learning off-site from the College of Pharmacy's main campus in Tallahassee.

"It was a pivotal point in time for our university," says Dr. Michael Thompson, dean of the FAMU College of Pharmacy. "We knew the Crestview campus would provide new opportunities for prospective pharmacy students in the area and a range of economic benefits for the city, but we first needed to determine how best to meet the requirements set by both our budget and the accreditation board."

Solution

FAMU first evaluated an asynchronous system, where pharmacy students at the Crestview campus would watch prerecorded lectures from professors at the College of Pharmacy's main campus in Tallahassee. However, the university soon ruled out the idea, as in conjunction with the college accreditation board's requirements, FAMU wanted to ensure that students at the Crestview campus would be able to participate in live lectures and ask professors questions in real time.

In moving away from an asynchronous system, FAMU adopted Cisco's TelePresence solutions for the College of Pharmacy. TelePresence is designed to link two physically separated rooms through high-quality voice and videoconferencing so that they resemble a single room, regardless of location.

FAMU chose Cisco TelePresence as a solution for its Crestview campus, due in large part to the benefits the university had seen from integrating the technology into other aspects of its academic offerings. Prior to deploying the technology in Crestview, FAMU was using TelePresence to bring in students and subject matter experts from other parts of the country and the world to enhance the educational process. The university was also using TelePresence to connect with business and government

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leaders to enable training for workforce development, with the technology serving as a high-definition video bridge capable of making it seem as if these leaders were presenting on-site within the lecture halls.

"Before TelePresence was integrated into Crestview, the technology was serving to help our university with an initiative to train and make resources available to the citizens and businesses of North Florida in order to improve economic development and employment opportunities," says Sterlin Adams, director of the Center for Public Computing and Workforce Development at FAMU. "The benefits we've seen as the technology has aided in delivering expertise and training to individuals and groups, regardless of location, made TelePresence a viable solution for providing high-quality education to the College of Pharmacy's Crestview campus."

With Cisco TelePresence solutions being highly configurable, the technology was easily integrated into the College of Pharmacy Crestview's network. By deploying the TelePresence systems, students in Crestview are now able to participate in live lectures as if they were sitting in the classroom in Tallahassee. The solutions incorporate smart boards and document cameras and screens to enable pharmacy students in Crestview to virtually view the course information and materials that professors post or write during their lectures.

Through Cisco Jabber for TelePresence, the university was able to extend its TelePresence capabilities for the College of Pharmacy satellite program. The Jabber Video solutions work with compatible PC and Mac computers and webcam technology to provide high-definition video communications to more students, on more devices, beyond the Crestview classrooms. Through Jabber Video guest lecturers, subject matter experts and students are able to remotely connect to FAMU's TelePresence systems, resulting in a wider community of students, faculty, staff and outside sources.

The TelePresence solutions ultimately give students the opportunity to collaborate by sharing their own documents, thoughts and questions in real time with the professors and students in Tallahassee and around the globe, without feeling as if they are learning from a distance. Just as the technology was easily integrated from other areas within FAMU over to the Crestview campus, the solutions work to serve as a robust unit capable of scaling up as the university's TelePresence usage accelerates and as its programs continue to grow.

Results

The Cisco TelePresence solutions adopted by FAMU have been met with approval from the university's students, faculty and the college accreditation board. After an on-site visit to assess the College of Pharmacy Crestview program, the college accreditors were impressed to learn that students had a lower failure rate than those enrolled at the main campus in Tallahassee. The university partially attributes this finding to the Crestview students' quick adoption of the technology for the learning process,

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Product List

VIDEO
- Cisco TelePresence MCU 5300 Series
- Cisco Jabber Video for TelePresence
- Cisco TelePresence Video Communications Server
- Cisco TelePresence Video Communications Server Expressway
- Cisco TelePresence Content Server
- Cisco TelePresence Management Suite
- Cisco TelePresence Codec C60
- Cisco TelePresence SX20 Quick Set Cisco TelePresence EX90

making the students more likely to go back online to consult past lectures and course materials to better obtain knowledge.

By deploying Cisco solutions, FAMU has saved hundreds of thousands of dollars that would otherwise be required to staff the Crestview campus with experienced pharmacy professors. The technology has enabled this process without jeopardizing the level of competency and creditability that Crestview pharmacy students gain from the satellite program.

"After using the Cisco TelePresence solution, I can report that it has work very smoothly with no interruptions, latency or down time," says Jason Mobley, senior IT specialist at FAMU's College of Pharmacy. "The level of support is bar none to any company that I've ever worked with."

The results FAMU has seen since deploying TelePresence, in terms of student successes and resourceful staffing, have also helped to establish the university as a thought leader on collaborative, real-time, virtual learning in higher education. Several universities in the state of Florida and on the U.S. East Coast are now looking to FAMU to provide insights and schedule site visits to further explore the process of developing satellite campuses for their own universities and academic offerings.

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Next Steps

FAMU is now working to incorporate Cisco TelePresence solutions into its leadership operations. The university's administration is preparing to adopt TelePresence technology to save both the time and resources required for a number of its standard on-site meetings and in-person management activities.

For More Information

To find out more about Cisco TelePresence, go to: http://www.cisco.com/web/go/telepresence.

To find out more about Cisco Jabber, go to: http://www.cisco.com/web/go/jabber.