State University Uses Video to Increase Classroom Reach

CISCO

Northwestern State University installs Cisco lecture capture and video solutions to increase resources and access.

Executive Summary

Northwestern State University
- **Industry:** Higher Education
- **Location:** Natchitoches, Louisiana
- **Number of Employees:** 920

CHALLENGE
- Increase efficiency among students by providing continual access to resources and classes
- Expand access to core and popular classes despite small campus
- Deploy solution that does not require hiring and repurposing of staff

SOLUTION
- Integrate video solutions for lecture capture
- Install Cisco TelePresence Management Suite (TMS) to help with pre-scheduling classes
- Improve collaboration by using Cisco Unified Videoconference Multipoint Control Unit

RESULTS
- Increased reach of teaching community, resulting in growing student population because of accessibility to classes
- Maximized number of classes offered to students by utilizing video for off-site classes
- Showcased university as leader in e-learning in Louisiana and among higher education institutions nationally

Challenge

Northwestern State University (NSU), located in Natchitoches, Louisiana, has been providing quality academic programming to students for over 125 years. NSU recognized the importance of technology in education early on, and has been a strong proponent of providing engaging electronic learning opportunities for some time. In early 2011, NSU encountered a number of budget cuts in regards to technical funding, but at the same time, the university needed to increase its video conferencing and lecture presence on the campus. "We wanted to use our existing network infrastructure and build on it as opposed to deploying an entirely new system," says Darlene Williams, vice president of technology, research, and economic development at NSU. "On our campus, we have to support a lot of systems, and when you are under budget constraints, hiring and repurposing staff to manage a new system gets expensive."

NSU turned to Cisco to expand its current network to support more video on the campus. The university was exceeding existing classroom capacity, but NSU wanted to enable more opportunities for the academic community. "Many of our facilities were built years ago and don't have the large, auditorium-style classrooms that newer campuses have," says Williams. "We really had to figure out how to do more while spending less."

When Cisco met with NSU to discuss a unified communications platform, the conversation soon turned to NSU's budget woes and ultimately the need for a collaboration-based architecture. Cisco was able to show how new video platforms can build on the university's current systems to increase functionality, efficiency, and expansion of their e-learning program, all while helping the university cut costs.

Solution

After hearing about NSU's desire to increase its electronic learning capabilities and enhance its dual-enrollment education, Cisco worked directly with NSU to help ensure the technologies purchased would expand its student reach throughout the state.

NSU invested in a Cisco® Unified Videoconference Multipoint Control Unit (MCU) to support the needs of its academic community. Cisco MCU is a high-performance, flexible, and scalable video infrastructure that enables face-to-face video discussions between participants, and helps enhance collaboration between faculty members and students across the state. Cisco partnered with BT Global Services, the state contract holder in Louisiana at the time, for a smooth transition and installation of the video units in classrooms.

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Tracy Brown
Associate Director of Technical Services, Northwestern State University

Product List

NETWORK MANAGEMENT
- Cisco TelePresence MSE 8000
- Cisco TelePresence Content Servers
- Cisco TelePresence Management Suite

VIDEO
- Cisco Videoconferencing MCU
- Cisco C60 TelePresence Endpoints
- Cisco TelePresence Video Communication Servers

For More Information

To find out more about the Cisco video and content delivery, go to: http://www.cisco.com/en/US/products/hw/video/index.html.

technical services for NSU. "They helped us roll out a system that not only was manageable, but affordable and easy to use." NSU also invested in a TelePresence Management Suite (TMS), which can support up to 100,000 users and devices, and allows for complete control and management of TelePresence conferencing and classes. NSU was interested in TMS to help with the lecture capture of classes, because the system employs an advanced scheduling feature and also allows for unplanned class and lecture capturing as well, which would allow NSU to offer more classes and provide recorded classes online for access at anytime.

Results

Even after the very first phase of implementation, NSU saw tangible results and received positive feedback from both students and faculty about its new video capabilities. Using TMS, NSU staff members have been able to schedule classes in advance, allowing NSU to better manage a larger number of class offerings. Not only is TMS helping meet the needs of students, but it has helped professors overcome their technology concerns. "With TMS and its advanced scheduling, we can streamline the lecture capture process," says Williams. "Classrooms are now set up from the start, so professors can walk in and just teach."

Thanks to the video installations and lecture capture, NSU has maximized the number of classes that it offers, and the access to those classes, despite the small size of its classrooms. This capability has also allowed the school to maintain its historical appearance, which was a major concern. On the main campus, NSU broadcasts classes throughout the campus, with individuals serving as proctors in the satellite classrooms that monitor the sessions, increasing student access to popular and core classes. The addition of the Cisco MCU has helped ensure that the set-up and broadcasting of these classes via video is cohesive and time efficient. The Cisco MCU has also helped reduce travel costs, because students can now access videos of lectures through NSU's e-community as opposed to commuting to campuses.

One of the greatest benefits that NSU has experienced since deploying its new video solutions is that, as one of the largest e-learning providers in the South, the campus is continuing to develop and deploy a video installation project that will be used as a model for other schools. "A lot of other schools are looking to lecture capture, and incorporate more media in learning," says Williams. "The video solutions we have purchased will not only help grow our e-learning community and increase access for students, but they will showcase NSU as a leader in the educational field."