



Industry

Higher Education

Daily Use

- Administrative Meetings
- Interviewing
- Intercampus Connectivity
- Interactive Distance Learning
- Virtual Field Trips
- Resource Sharing
- Campus Extensions

Solution

- Video telepresence network connecting 22 Central Arizona College sites
- County-wide video distance learning consortium promoting use of video technology for educational purposes

Results and Benefits

- Effective allocation of scarce faculty resources, resulting in greater opportunity for student achievement and success
- \$11,000 monthly cost savings

Central Arizona College Provides Opportunities, Saves Money with Polycom Distance Learning Network

Overview

The mission of Pinal County's Central Arizona College (CAC) is to help all of its students achieve their educational goals. That's a tall order in a county that's as big as the entire state of Connecticut and home to isolated rural populations, many of whom are Latino and Native American and often the first in their families to attend college.

To address these access challenges, CAC has been developing and fine-tuning an expansive Polycom video distance learning network over the last 10 years. The network connects its main campus in Coolidge, Ariz. with the College's three remote campuses and several learning centers in the county as well as with high schools, junior high schools and elementary schools. The result is a dramatic expansion of course offerings at remote CAC campuses and an improved ability to help students successfully obtain higher education, regardless of where they live.

Expanding the Network, Expanding the Opportunities

Effectively allocating scarce faculty resources drove the implementation of video communications at CAC. Rich King, Associate VP of Instructional Technology Services & CTO for CAC explains. "We have to use our assets wisely and that means leveraging teaching resources. For example, we can't have a full-time math teacher for two students, but we can offer the class over video from a location with a full class. Video conferencing is how we make things happen."

What started in the mid-1990s as a small, proprietary ISDN-based distance learning solution has grown into a robust telepresence network that connects schools seamlessly throughout the county. In fact, King and his team were instrumental in creating the ITV Consortium, a non-profit that fosters the use of ITV for educational purposes.

A Trusted Partner, An Industry Innovator

Consortium-wide, there is a total of 65 Polycom endpoints, 22 of which reside at CAC campuses and facilities. Working with longtime partner BT Conferencing, CAC has standardized on the Polycom® HDX® line of high-definition video communications solutions. BT also provides ongoing support for CAC and plays a key role in planning for the future of its distance learning network. In addition, CAC relies on BT's in-house, dedicated video conferencing helpdesk, which is unrivaled in the industry for its depth of expertise and 24x7 availability.

King and his team have customized three different types of conferencing rooms. Those rooms range from a Polycom system on a portable cart, to a completely empty "free-form" room that can be configured for almost any type of use, to, finally, a fully-installed conferencing suite. All rooms are standardized, which makes them easy for the faculty to use and provides level of consistency that King feels has helped speed adoption of the technology.

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CAC has been a Polycom customer for more than a decade, and King explains why. “We wanted our distance learning interactions to be as natural as possible and realized that showing images captured on a document camera to the far site for an hour would not achieve that. What we needed was a way to show both a high-resolution VGA image and the instructor. The Polycom People+Content™ solution delivers exactly that. We have standardized on Polycom People+Content and all of our room designs have been based on that technology.”

The Polycom CMA Desktop solution has helped to greatly expand the number of dedicated video endpoints for CAC, and at a minimal cost. Twenty CMA-specific endpoints increase access to tutoring for students, allowing them to connect to the College's three tutoring centers from any CAC location.

In addition, CMA has been installed on employee computers to allow remote attendance of meetings. It is also showing great potential as a solution for students with special needs who have a hard time making it to a CAC campus.

For other academic institutions interested in deploying a video distance learning network, King stresses the importance of working closely with the organization's network team to align on goals and, ultimately, bandwidth allocation. He is also quick to point out potential firewall issues. To address those within CAC and connect easily with the outside world, King deployed the Polycom Video Border Proxy™ (VBP®) firewall traversal solution.

Impacts across the Institution

The CAC video distance learning network has dramatically improved the school's ability to serve its rural residents. In addition, it is saving the institution at least \$11,000 every month by reducing the need to travel for meetings.

“Not only does video conferencing technology help our student population gain access to needed resources, it has become a major communications tool for us,” says King. “All of the College's staff meetings are held over video, we simply can't afford to drive people around. We also do things like employee interviews and legal depositions.”

CAC has also been able to offer classes to Arizona State University, connect with the University of Arizona and Northern Arizona University, and even enable faculty to teach directly to graduate students in China.

The Next Steps

Moving forward, King anticipates consortium-wide increased use of Polycom HD video solutions, not only in new deployments, but also from swapping out existing standard definition codecs for HD as funds become available. He is also very intrigued by the flexibility of the Polycom CMA solution and sees almost limitless opportunities to add personal applications at very minimal cost.

Learn More

To find out how Polycom solutions can help your organization, visit us at www.polycom.com or call 1-800-POLYCOM to speak with a Polycom representative.

Partner

BT Conferencing

www.btconferencing.com



Product Listing

Telepresence and Video Conferencing

- Polycom® HDX® telepresence solutions
- Polycom Converged Management Application™ (CMA®) Desktop solution

Infrastructure

- Polycom Video Border Proxy™ (VBP®) firewall traversal solution
- Polycom Converged Management Application™ (CMA®) solution

Partner Solution

- Polycom People+Content™ technology solution

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