

Community College Leverages Video Network to Provide e-Advising

Burlington County College provides access to tuition and course information, increasing student services.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
<p>BURLINGTON COUNTY COLLEGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher Education Pemberton, New Jersey 12,000 students
<p>EDUCATION CHALLENGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep growing, dispersed student population connected and informed Support enhanced student services with budgetary constraints to telephone network in an environment that is inhospitable to cell phones
<p>SOLUTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage existing network infrastructure to implement flexible, scalable video infrastructure with Cisco/TANDBERG desktop video and video management solutions Access e-advisor counselors via “help” kiosks
<p>RESULTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided students with access to information, such as tuition guidelines, course selection, financial aid, and payment plans Captured and stored digital content, such as recorded lectures, over video network

Education Challenge

Burlington County College (BCC) is a community college located in a rural area of New Jersey. An accredited, co-educational, two-year public community college, BCC is spread out among five centers (including one military base) with more than 12,000 students. BCC was recently named among the 50-fastest growing community colleges in the nation. Its credit enrollment now exceeds 10,000 on two campuses and four centers.

“For more than 40 years, BCC has proudly served Burlington, the largest county in the state,” says Mark Meara, the chief information officer for BCC. “As the only source of higher education in Burlington County, we strive to meet and exceed, the educational goals and workforce development needs in this area, which often proves to be challenging based on the large geographic area we cover.”

The growing, vastly dispersed student population constantly pushes BCC officials to implement new and improved methods to provide enhanced services to the college community and keep students connected and informed. However, like most U.S. community colleges, the current economic landscape has forced budgetary constraints. “Most community colleges in New Jersey have one or two locations and use video convergence to connect with one another,” says Naydeen Tyffane Gonzalez-DeJesus, associate dean of academic advisement, transfer, special populations and educational opportunity fund for BCC. “With five different locations, BCC has a unique challenge in offering a comprehensive, reliable, scalable solution. To succeed in providing access and connectivity to our students in a cost-effective manner, we had to leverage our existing technologies to provide updated services.”

BCC officials began developing the concept of an e-advising initiative across the centers through the college’s existing network infrastructure. The college’s legacy wide-area-network was already fairly sophisticated with a solid network infrastructure, large bandwidth, and broadband speeds.

Solution

In August 2010, BCC officials looked to Cisco to leverage video content over the network and create a video conference facility at one of the five center locations with TANDBERG video equipment and solutions.

The facility includes a flexible and scalable video infrastructure with desktop video and video management solutions. The TANDBERG Movi solution is designed for high-definition (HD) video environments and provides processing up to 720p resolution, interoperability between standards-based video systems, firewall traversal, and a dynamic and automatic resource allocation to optimize the capacity for mixed endpoint environments.

“Help” kiosks are available for students at each center to securely log-in and engage with an e-advisor counselor, who is physically stationed at the main campus, via online chat and video. If necessary, the counselor can immediately direct students to the BCC website to access additional information. For example, if students inquire about the availability of a certain course, they can automatically sign up for that course then and there.

“We are able to give our students accessibility to the information they need anytime, anywhere,” says Gonzalez-DeJesus. “By providing remote advising services to our varied locations, we are cutting the costs associated with having physical advisors stationed at all locations.”

“Our number-one goal is to provide students with the necessary tools to be successful. Our new Cisco video system not only helps us meet this goal, but also increases student services and satisfaction.”

— Naydeen Tyffane Gonzalez-DeJesus, M.A., Associate Dean of Academic Advisement, Transfer, Special Populations and Educational Opportunity Fund, Burlington County College

Results

“Before we deployed the e-advising program, students would wait in line for up to two hours in

PRODUCT LIST	
Video	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TANDBERG Video Conferencing • TANBERG Movi • Cisco® TelePresence Content Server

order to speak with an advisor,” says Jennifer Shendock, e-academic advisor for BCC. “Now, it takes only 15 to 20 minutes for students to get their questions answered.

“We are receiving great feedback from students. The easy access to pertinent college information such as

tuition guidelines, course selection, financial aid, and payment plans, is helping students accomplish necessary tasks quickly, thus enabling a better experience at BCC,” continues Shendock. “While, at first, students can be a bit apprehensive to the change, they quickly become comfortable once they see a real person helping them in real time.”

BCC conducts extensive outreach about the e-advising program during student orientations, including educational group sessions on how the system works. Once an e-advising account has been set up, students receive program alerts and updates to further provide them with information about the program and how it can benefit their overall user experience. By the end of August 2010, 25 students had enrolled in the e-advising program, and by January 2011, 250 had signed up and used the services.

The new technology is also assisting BCC’s “nontraditional” students through the new technology. Those who have jobs, children, and other responsibilities outside of BCC now have access to an advisor when it is convenient for them. “I held an e-advising chat with a student who is also a stay-at-home mother and cannot physically come on campus,” says Shendock. “She was excited and appreciative that we were able to provide her with the answers she needed when she needed them.”

Officials are also able to capture digital content over the video network, including recorded lectures, through the Cisco TelePresence® Content Server. The server provides BCC with a quick and easy way to record, edit, and watch video content. “Our number-one goal is to provide students with the necessary tools to be successful. Our new Cisco video system not only helps us meet this goal, but also increases student services and satisfaction,” says Gonzalez-DeJesus.

Next Steps

Although BCC is currently focusing on the e-advising application, officials intend to leverage the video system for other purposes in the near future. “We are looking to hold regular multicampus meetings and faculty meetings through the video conferencing technology,” says Meara. “We are also encouraging employees to apply the technology within their business functionalities, operations, and lesson plans. We want to continue investing in this technology and spread the good word, so more and more students sign up to the program.”

In January 2011, BCC plans to deploy Mobile Video Conferencing (Movi) throughout the center locations. This will allow students at home to use the video solution and stay connected to the e-advisors as long as they have a broadband connection and a webcam.

For More Information

To find out more about the Cisco/TANDBERG video solutions, go to: www.tandberg.com



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