



## Rural College in Georgia Uses Grants to BlendFlex Learning

### Central Georgia Technical College:

**Size:** More than 12,165 credit students

**Industry:** Higher Education

**Location:** Macon, Georgia

### Solutions

- Engaged Cisco Public Funding Team to secure supplemental funding
- Used Cisco technology to accommodate customized video-conferencing technology
- Provided a platform for blended-learning classes

### Challenge

Located in Macon, Georgia, Central Georgia Technical College's (CGTC) campuses span 12 counties and serve approximately 12,165 credit students. Known in Georgia for engaging rural and remote communities, CGTC provides academic and technical education, customized business and industry training, continuing education, and adult education services to a wide range of learners.

In recent years, CGTC began to experience lower-than-average student retention rates. One of the reasons the school needed to increase its retention was due to its course structure. In the past, CGTC offered three, mutually exclusive ways for students to take courses: face-to-face (traditional) instruction, online instruction, and a hybrid model of classroom and online learning. Students were allowed to select only one method of delivery; if their schedules changed, students were forced to drop classes.

To accommodate flexible learning, CGTC developed BlendFlex learning, which uses advanced technology capabilities such as video, voice, and sharable conferencing

technologies. Even though the BlendFlex program carried enormous potential, the distribution of students among multiple classrooms throughout the state presented challenges for sustaining IT and teaching resources, managing personnel, and providing appropriate opportunities for BlendFlex classes.

To address these needs in the face of budget and personnel limitations, CGTC decided to implement a comprehensive grant initiative to make the BlendFlex program a possibility. The school also hoped to supplement this initiative with its goal of providing a high-quality education to all CGTC students.

Gardner Long, CGTC's vice president of technology, notes that, "By committing CGTC to implementing creative solutions and incorporating technology strategies, we are helping to prepare our students to become assets to our nation's workforce."

### Solution

As a current Cisco® customer, Long and the CGTC technology team attended an online webinar to receive more information about the Cisco Public Funding Team, which helps to secure

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**Gardner Long**  
Vice President, Technology,  
Central Georgia Technical  
College

## With Cisco, CGTC...



Increased student participation in BlendFlex learning courses



Provided higher-level learning opportunities to students statewide



Improved student success rates and course attrition rates



Expanded reach and scope of grants program

funding for technology solutions that support vital community programs. CGTC decided to work with this grants team to learn about various state opportunities, methods for obtaining funding, and ways to apply grants to numerous academic projects.

The details of this discussion and a roadmap from the Cisco Public Funding Team can be watched in this webinar: <https://goo.gl/5TSqKV>.

With CGTC's budget restrictions and limited resources to staff and a separate internal grants team, the school's technology team developed a close working relationship with the Cisco Public Funding Team. With Cisco assistance, CGTC was able to explore different funding opportunities and present grant organizations with concrete examples of the college's innovative technology solutions, proving that its programs can lead to actionable change.

"If not for the support and guidance provided by the Cisco grants team, I do not believe BlendFlex learning would be a reality for our students, our teachers, and our community," says Long. "Working with Cisco will directly, and positively, impact the educational opportunities we can provide to future generations."

CGTC and the Cisco Public Funding Team identified the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) Grant Program, which fit CGTC's criteria and was within its reach. The Cisco team worked in close collaboration with CGTC representatives, guiding them through the application process and challenging these education professionals to create innovative ideas to use technology. CGTC was awarded \$2.6 million in 2014 for its health education programs.

The grant allowed CGTC to deploy its BlendFlex learning model, which also

incorporated Cisco TelePresence®, Jabber® and WebEx® solutions—collaborative presence applications that connect people regardless of distance or time. Together, these collaboration solutions connect classrooms across CGTC's satellite and rural campuses, attract a broader range of students, eliminate any differences between online and in-person classes, and provide students with more flexibility when it comes to attendance.

## Results

Using Cisco technologies and the expertise of the Cisco Public Funding Team yielded a powerful result for CGTC: connectivity. With the BlendFlex learning model, students at CGTC—whether remote or on campus—can access teacher-prepared content, case study discussions, and live interviews through any synchronous video solution available, all from the classroom, the workplace, or home. As a second option, students can also take classes asynchronously online by using CGTC's learning management system, which stores the links to faculty-recorded class lectures and other course content. The third, and truly innovative option is a learner-in-control approach, which begins with the student flexibility, allowing them to move from one delivery method to another based on preference.

CGTC's outcomes using the BlendFlex learning model are impressive. The college's average course success rate in BlendFlex classes are higher (84 percent) than in non-BlendFlex classes (80 percent). The average course attrition rate is also lower in BlendFlex classes (12 percent) versus non-BlendFlex class (21 percent). These outcomes demonstrate that students perform better in BlendFlex classes and are staying in class.

Since implementation, student surveys found that 99 percent of respondents say they liked the flexibility to attend classes

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onsite, at a different location, online, or on a device of choice. Ninety-five percent of the students responded that they liked being able to switch methods of delivery at any time, because of their changing family and professional needs. Also, 91 percent of students said they would take another class in the BlendFlex learning model, and 93 percent said they would recommend it to other students.

Based on its collaboration with the Cisco Public Funding Team, CGTC recently rolled out a strategic plan and a guide for grant application and usage. Through 2015, CGTC and Cisco continued working together on new grant opportunities, and

as a result, the college was awarded the following grants: a First in the World (FITW) Grant from the U.S Department of Education, which is designed to support the development of innovative solutions to support nontraditional students; a Peyton Anderson Grant, which benefits organizations in Macon and Bibb County, Georgia; a PBI grant, which is aimed towards African American education; a Dollar General Grant, which focuses on adult education; and a Community Foundation Grant for CGTC's analytics program. Also, CGTC participated in the Perkins Federal Loan Grant Program.

### *For More Information*

For more information about Cisco help with grants and Cisco technology, visit the following websites:

Cisco grants strategy: [http://www.cisco.com/web/strategy/education/us\\_education/grants\\_strategy\\_edu.html](http://www.cisco.com/web/strategy/education/us_education/grants_strategy_edu.html).

Cisco TelePresence solutions: <http://www.cisco.com/go/telepresence>

Cisco Jabber solutions: <http://www.cisco.com/go/jabber>

Cisco WebEx solutions: <http://www.cisco.com/webex>

Cisco Capture-Transform-Share platform: <http://www.cisco.com/web/solutions/videoplatform/index.html>

### *Products and Services*

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|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <b>Program</b>                 | • Cisco Jabber solutions                 |
| • Cisco Public Funding Team    | • Cisco WebEx solutions                  |
| <b>Video</b>                   | • Cisco Capture-Transform-Share platform |
| • Cisco TelePresence solutions |                                          |



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