

Community College Refreshes Network with Innovative Financing Offer



Palm Beach State College installed Cisco network to support new learning technologies and scale for future by utilizing Cisco Capital.

Executive Summary



PALM BEACH STATE COLLEGE

- **Industry:** Higher Education
- **Location:** Belle Glade, Lake Worth and Palm Beach Gardens, Florida
- **Annual Students:** 49,000

CHALLENGE

- Update aging infrastructure and add modern instruction tools
- Support network refresh at lowest cost possible and begin work before repayment
- Scale new network for future updates and additions

SOLUTION

- Updated network foundation to support new services and scale for future
- Integrated 21st century learning tools into classroom and online instruction
- Increased number of mobile devices students can use on campus

RESULTS

- Completed total technology refresh due to alternate funding solution
- Deployed technology in less than one year versus up to five-year phased-in approach
- Completed network overhaul to serve and protect over 800,000 students and alumni

Challenge

Palm Beach State College (PBSC) in Lake Worth, Florida is the oldest community college in the state. Launching with 41 students in 1933 as Florida's first public community college, PBSC celebrated its 80th anniversary in 2013. PBSC is now the largest institution of higher education in Palm Beach County and serves 49,000 students annually. The college offers classes at four locations and is planning a new campus to be built in west central Palm Beach County in 2014.

Over time PBSC's mission has become more comprehensive to serve the educational needs of Palm Beach County residents. The college offers bachelor's and associate degrees through a range of workforce programs, including law enforcement, flight training, fire-fighting, architecture, welding, cosmetology, and more. PBSC also offers professional certificates, workforce development, and lifelong learning.

PBSC educates many students who would have otherwise not attended or dropped out of college, and in 2012 the college needed to update its infrastructure to enhance its educational offerings. As student and faculty demand grew for more information technology (IT)-based applications, so did the need for new types of security such as surveillance cameras and classroom call buttons. Other goals included making the baccalaureate program available online and integrating tablet computers and iPads into scientific and healthcare programs.

To adapt to new types of 21st century learning and safety, PBSC decided to refresh and replace much of its aging technology. From core networking equipment in the data center to the switching in each wiring closet, the college needed to make meaningful changes to increase agility, speed, scalability, and access to modern education tools. However, due to the scale and size of the technology overhaul, PBSC was skeptical that it could complete a refresh within a budget that would work for the college.

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Palm Beach State College

Solution

In 2012, Tony Parziale, chief information officer at PBSC, drafted and circulated a request-for-proposal (RFP) detailing the college’s technology needs. Parziale’s top concern was how to finance such a large and invasive technical overhaul. “From the beginning, it was PBSC’s intention to commence the entire technology refresh at once due to scale,” says Parziale. “Our needs were immediate, and our financing concerns were our top challenge.”

Following feedback from the RFP, Parziale and his IT team noticed a trend in equipment offerings: Cisco. “Cisco made sense as a leader in the industry, but our staff also had in-depth knowledge of Cisco management tools and equipment from past successes at the college,” says Parziale.

After deciding that Cisco® equipment was the right solution for PBSC, Parziale engaged with the local Cisco account team to discuss unique funding options. To create a funding schedule that worked for PBSC, Cisco Capital® – a group within Cisco that provides competitive and flexible financing to acquire Cisco technologies – engaged Bank of America (BOA). Together, Cisco Capital and BOA developed a five-year financing plan for PBSC with annual payments that would allow the college to break ground immediately.

With this unique financing model in place, PBSC was able to begin work on its technology refresh before making its first payment.

“When Cisco’s zero percent financing solution was presented to the board, it not only made sense, but was easily approved,” says Parziale. With Cisco’s financing model, the PBSC board did not need to use any of its monetary reserves or introduce cuts to any of its educational programs. To accommodate the project, the college raised the overall technology fee to cover its annual payments. “Students are the primary beneficiaries of any technical update, and the board agreed that adjusting our technology fee was the right way to compensate for these payments,” says Parziale.

Once the college approved the technology refresh, Parziale and his team hired an architect to design the new network, with review and validation from the Cisco account team. The PBSC team broke ground on the project in December 2012. The IT team began by implementing Cisco Nexus® 7000 Series Switches, which created the network foundation for PBSC’s next-generation unified fabric data center, in addition to widespread Cisco wireless solutions and access points. Instead of three to five years, the deployment took just under one year to complete due to the financing deal that PBSC agreed to with Cisco.

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Product List

ROUTING AND SWITCHING

- Cisco Nexus 7000 Series Switches
- Cisco Catalyst® 2960 Series Switches

NETWORK MANAGEMENT

- Cisco Prime NCS
- Cisco WCS

SECURITY AND VPN

- Cisco ISE 3315

WIRELESS

- Cisco 5508 Controllers
- Cisco 2602 Access Points

Results

Due to the funding structure that Cisco was able to deliver, PBSC now manages a technology network that operates faster with minimal fixes. With a wider range and much deeper bandwidth, the wireless network supports both students and faculty across all campuses. In the past, a single access point could only support ten users at a time. Now, the college’s access points can support up to 30 connections simultaneously.

Due to the impressive bandwidth at PBSC, instructors are now able to integrate video and audio into teaching and learning content. The college installed workstations that instructors use in addition to their college laptops, and workstations load an individual’s profile to better accommodate teaching and accesses secure, centrally-stored content.

“When you look into our libraries, and across our campus, students are now gathering and socializing in new ways, which we’re happy to have integrated into the learning experience,” says Parziale. “More students can access our wireless network with more devices and faster speeds without worrying about a wireless connection.”

In addition to successes within the classroom, PBSC has been able to better secure its campus, which supports not only its current student body, but many of its 800,000 alumni. Because the network houses personal information, PBSC has a critical need to secure the network and protect the campus; the network is now functioning thanks to Cisco’s unique funding structure. “There is a need to keep security up 24 hours a day, and the ability to have all of our systems operational around the clock enables us to protect our community,” says Parziale.

PBSC’s distance learning enrollment grew 45 percent over five years, and with its new network, the program will be able to scale over the next decade to accommodate an even larger increase in digital learning.

For More Information

- To find out more about Cisco switching, go to: <http://www.cisco.com/go/switching>.
- To find out more about Cisco wireless, go to: <http://www.cisco.com/go/wireless>.
- To find out more about Cisco security, go to: <http://www.cisco.com/go/security>.