



The customer summary

Customer name
Salve Regina University

Industry
Higher education

Location
Newport, RI

Number of students
2,600

Salve Regina University Maintains Community Feel Throughout Pandemic

Known for its picturesque setting and tight-knit community, Salve Regina University leaned on Cisco to deliver a good experience during times of physical separation.

Challenges

- Providing secure remote access to students and staff during COVID-19
- Video conferencing needs for distance learning
- Secure, fast, and reliable Wi-Fi and internet
- Facilitating a new esports offering

Solutions

- Webex® Meetings
- Cisco Meraki®
- Cisco Capital®

Results

- Secure distance learning success
- New virtual tools for teachers and students
- Creation of an esports facility, leading to improved student morale
- Campus-wide, trouble-free wireless network for visitors
- Improved outreach for prospective new students



Rapid pandemic response

When you walk onto the campus at Salve Regina University, in Newport, Rhode Island, the first thing you notice is the breathtaking beauty of this private, coeducational university. But like most universities – and every other business in 2020 – the view changed dramatically and quickly when the pandemic hit. Students who once sat together in classrooms and gathered all around campus were suddenly isolated, their academic futures uncertain. But Salve Regina wasted no time in responding by pivoting to what the university called “Virtual Salve.”

“Literally, overnight, we had to come up with a strategy to allow everyone, our students, our staff and administrators, to be able operate on campus, off campus, or any combination thereof,” says Irving Bruckstein, Salve’s CIO. He adds, “So we repurposed everyone on the IT staff into a triage operation and we worked literally around the clock to get everybody initially up and running just to finish the spring semester.” Bruckstein reports that the university converted about 950 classes from physical in-person to

remote learning very quickly. “We did it because we had good foundational technology, and the technology itself was easy for everyone to turn on and tee up for class. It was that easy.”

Once the spring 2020 semester ended, the IT team at Salve had some breathing room. They had time to make a game plan that would create long-term, sustainable, collaboration success at the university. So, they created an emergency management team and identified roughly 20 unique technology challenges they needed to address. Among the challenges was having the right technology in classes and in dormitories, so that everyone could enjoy a synchronous, engaged learning environment.

Bruckstein says, “We first put together mobile classroom technology kits, so that in a moment’s notice, within 15 or 20 minutes, an IT staff member could show up at any location and deploy the kit and create a dual modality classroom environment, whether that be inside or outside at a remote venue for co-curricular activity.”

The other issue they wanted to address was making the laboratory learning environment available to students.

“We put together mobile capture kits, wearable technology, where a faculty member could go into a lab, conduct the lab, record it, submit it to IT, and the IT department would then process and post it for the students to view,” says Bruckstein.

How was the university able to respond so quickly and effectively? Well, according to Michael Vucci, the Director of Cybersecurity, at Salve, “Our partnership with Cisco and the foundational technology that we had in place with Cisco Meraki was instrumental to our ability to pivot quickly and serve our community needs.” He says, “Let’s put it this way, when you build a house, you build the foundation first and then you build a house on top of it. So, having a Cisco® network, that was the epitome of

“Our partnership with Cisco and the foundational technology that we had in place with Cisco Meraki was instrumental to our ability to pivot quickly and serve our community needs.”

Michael Vucci

Director of Cybersecurity, Salve Regina University

a foundation right there. So, I had no problem after the fact that we were told that we were going to go 100% e-learning.”

Bruckstein adds, “We have Cisco Virtual Private Networking technology in place, and that allowed everyone who could not be on campus during the pandemic to securely access all of our systems and technology resources. I would say that our overall Cisco framework, which provided robust network performance that was scalable and secure, was foundational to our success, especially during the early days of COVID.”

Learning goes digital

The faculty at Salve Regina discovered quickly that their day-to-day routines were suddenly anything but routine. Elizabeth Fitzgibbon, a professor of mathematical sciences at Salve, says, “It was definitely a big change and very sudden.” She says, “From that point on, it was really important [to be able to] walk into the classroom and make sure all the technology is up and running. I make sure to check the microphones, the video, make sure students can hear me, and that I can hear them. It took a little time to get used to, but now, it’s just part of what we do. It’s second nature.”

Fitzgibbon says everyone did what they could to help each faculty member get up to speed with the new technology. She says, “We were training people on Webex®, getting them ready to teach their classes online and to meet with their students online.” She adds, “It was really wonderful that Webex integrates with our learning management system. The IT team made it easy. All a faculty member



needs to do is just get into their core settings, turn it on, and then schedule their meetings. Once that’s done, the students can access all of their meetings for all of their courses from one integrated calendar.”

The feature Fitzgibbon says she likes best about Webex is the recording functionality. “My feeling was that if I was going to be using Webex anyway to broadcast my meetings, that I might as well record them and save them for students so they could access them after class,” says Fitzgibbon. She adds, “A student who might have been absent from the class could just watch the lecture remotely, and a student who was in attendance, but wanted to go over a specific part of the lecture again, could re-watch it later. All the recordings are saved on a single page for our course, so all a student has to do is log in and click that link.”

“It was really wonderful that Webex integrates with our learning management system. The IT team made it easy. All a faculty member needs to do is just get into their core settings, turn it on, and then schedule their meetings. Once that’s done, the students can access all of their meetings for all of their courses from one integrated calendar.”

Elizabeth Fitzgibbon

Professor of Mathematical Sciences, Salve Regina University

Fitzgibbon says additional features, like the secure chat functionality that Webex provides, as well as virtual hand raising, that lets a professor know that a student wants to be called upon in the virtual environment, are invaluable ways for students to feel included and part of the class, and played a vital in the overall success of the university's response to the pandemic.

Bruckstein says, "Cisco listened. There are a number of other enhancements that Cisco made during the pandemic that really turned Webex into the product of choice."

Webex also helped the university from an admissions perspective, on the university's popular Open House, known as Connections Day. They had over a thousand attendees, including students and their families, attend virtual sessions that they normally would have hosted in person.

Building camaraderie

One of the finer aspects of the higher education experience, especially at a smaller school like Salve Regina, is the sense of community that goes along with it. For most, college life is about much more than attending class and making high marks. It's about the friendships and connections that are made along the way.



it was, as Bruckstein describes it, "a dramatic game-changer." He says, "Esports provided a new avenue for our students to collaborate and have some recreational activities on campus when they were locked down and constrained. The Cisco networking technology we put in



Flexible payment solution

How was Salve Regina able to be so flexible and nimble in its response to the technology challenges presented by COVID-19?

With flexible payment by Cisco Capital. By providing the University with the ability to pay over five fiscal years, it left room in their capital budget for additional technology investments, further enhancing their strategic partnership with Cisco.

Bruckstein says, “Cisco Capital was a great partner for allowing us to spread out those costs over a number of years. And the terms were favorable. Their people were wonderful to work with and we look forward to partnering with them on future networking endeavors.”

Lessons learned

The future looks bright at Salve Regina University. Students, faculty, and administrators, all feel like they

have overcome incredible odds, to not only survive, but thrive, during, and even long after the pandemic is over.

And when it comes to education, there’s always a lesson or two to be learned along the way.

“What we’ve learned is that our students value most the interpersonal relationships that they form with their faculty and with their classmates,” says Fitzgibbon. “And even in this time of physical distancing, we haven’t lost that personal relationship because we’ve been able to continue meeting virtually with our online meeting platforms.”

For more information

Please visit <https://www.cisco.com/c/en/us/solutions/industries/education.html>

Product list - Salve Regina University

- Webex® Meetings
- Cisco Meraki®
- Cisco Capital®

“Cisco Capital was a great partner for allowing us to spread out those costs over a number of years. And the terms were favorable. Their people were wonderful to work with and we look forward to partnering with them on future networking endeavors.”

Irving Bruckstein

CIO, Salve Regina University