

Top College System in Florida Utilizes Video Technology to Encourage Higher Graduation Rates Among Its Seven Campuses



Challenge

Santa Fe College realized the value of video communications across its eight campuses, but desperately needed to upgrade its legacy Polycom equipment, which was causing more trouble than it was worth.

Solution

After hearing a tip from University of Florida, Santa Fe College opted to invest in Lifesize video technology. The IT department installed a full suite of virtualized infrastructure including Lifesize UVC Video Center, Lifesize UVC Transit, Lifesize UVC Access, and Lifesize ClearSea, as well as Lifesize Bridge 2200 and Lifesize Express 220 endpoints.

Results

Professors are now able to teach classes in a virtual environment between the main campus in Gainesville and the six other satellite campuses. Faculty and students alike are thrilled with the improvement in video quality and are now using video in a variety of classroom and administrative settings.

With the help of Lifesize HD video conferencing technology, Santa Fe College students can attend class at a local campus or online while still receiving an award-winning education.

ORGANIZATION

Santa Fe College, Gainesville, Florida



Based in Gainesville, Florida, Santa Fe College is one of the premier public colleges in the United States. Founded in 1965, the college offers a variety of educational options including associate and bachelor's degrees, as well as technical certificates and continuing education enrichment programs. With over 24,000 degree-seeking students from across the United States and more than 54 countries, Santa Fe College is proud to be one of the top educational institutions in the state of Florida.

Santa Fe College offers seven convenient and attractive campus locations, as well as online courses, to expand educational opportunities to more students across the region. By widening its reach and making it more convenient for students to attend classes from wherever they are, the college ranks first among public colleges in graduation rate and in the Top 10 nationally in the number of associate degrees awarded in liberal arts.



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Challenge

Because Santa Fe College has seven different campuses throughout the state of Florida, the college faced a familiar personnel challenge with three options. First, the college could elect to hire individual professors to work at each college campus. Second, Santa Fe College could ask their professors to travel between campuses to teach classes to students across the network. Finally, the college could use video communication to link up classrooms virtually, which eliminates the need for costly travel or hiring additional faculty. The administration at Santa Fe College knew that the most responsible and cost-effective choice was the third option, but finding a suitable HD video conferencing technology to make this dream a reality was a unique challenge of its own.

Santa Fe College invested in video conferencing equipment years ago which had become dated. The video quality was so poor and unreliable the professors rarely wanted to use it in the classroom. Not only was the equipment dated, it lacked bandwidth flexibility and collapsed under poor bandwidth conditions.

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At Santa Fe College, we aim to do everything we can to help our students graduate, and making classes more convenient through the power of Lifesize is an essential part of that equation.”

– FRED EVANS



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Solution

Once Santa Fe College’s Information Technology Services department realized the need to upgrade to HD video conferencing technology, the search for the right manufacturer began. The IT team spoke to the University of Florida (UF) who had been using video technology with success for years. Santa Fe College also sought assistance from Dell and received a recommendation for Lifesize, a division of Logitech, which was well-known as the pioneer for high definition video communications.

“We trusted UF and knew they had more experience with HD video than we did,” explained Evans. “Once we saw the Lifesize system in action for ourselves, we realized that it was exactly what we needed. It was tremendous video that would be ideal in the classroom setting. It wasn’t long before we placed an initial order and overhauled our entire video environment.”

Santa Fe College invested in a number of Lifesize hardware and virtualized software solutions, including Lifesize Express 220 as their endpoint of choice, Lifesize UVC Video Center for streaming and recording, Lifesize Bridge 2200 for multiparty calls, Lifesize UVC Access for gatekeeping, routing and call control, Lifesize UVC Transit for firewall traversal, Lifesize ClearSea for mobile video conferencing and a touch-screen phone for ease of use.

“We were so eager to deploy Lifesize that we actually implemented it three months ahead of schedule because our Polycom legacy equipment was failing so quickly,” said Evans. “I remember showing one of the faculty members the first Lifesize system we set up and he said, ‘Wow! I can actually see!’ It made me laugh, but really it just demonstrated how much better the quality was than before.”



“Before Lifesize, using video was a nightmare. Now, I can teach from any location and my students don’t miss a beat. It’s a lot better than it was. All I can say is, thank you!”

Learn More

Make sure to check out our other case studies at www.Lifesize.com/en/case-studies to learn more about how Lifesize is transforming communication.

Results

Since implementing a full suite of Lifesize solutions in the data center and in the classroom, Santa Fe College is using video conferencing extensively. Instead of hiring new teachers for the satellite campuses or asking professors to travel between locations, classes can be conducted in a virtual environment. A professor will teach at the main Gainesville campus and broadcast the lecture to two or three other locations. Because Lifesize offers interactive video calls, students from satellite locations are able to engage with their professor and classmates in real time, raise their hand and ask live questions. Additionally, teachers are able to attach their projectors and document cameras to the system to share content simultaneously with the video stream.

“I require attendance for my Honors Calculus classes, but I understand that my students cannot always attend in-person. Lifesize offers me the ability to record my lectures so my students can watch whenever it is convenient for them,” said Aharon Dagan, Associate Professor of Mathematics at Santa Fe College. “Before Lifesize, I was using a webcam and a laptop to record lectures. Now the Lifesize recordings are in HD and the picture and audio quality is just great. My students have found these recordings helpful for exam review, as well.”

“I currently teach music appreciation to students on-site at the Gainesville campus, as well as satellite campuses that are 45 minutes away. Lifesize allows me to play music and display my lecture notes at the same time. If the sound quality wasn’t acceptable, this model would never work. Thankfully, everything sounds terrific on Lifesize and my students are able to experience the music exactly the way the composer intended,” said Dr. Samantha Ryan Barnsfather, Adjunct Associate Professor for Fine Arts at Santa Fe College.

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Evans and his IT team understand the potential that video communications has and intend to extend it to even more activities throughout the campuses, including Student Senate meetings and admissions interviews.

“Video requires a commitment from everyone, from IT to the faculty to the students. But once everyone made that commitment, the technology exceeded expectations and we’re able to do more than we ever thought possible,” said Evans. “At Santa Fe College, we aim to do everything we can to help our students graduate, and making classes more convenient through the power of Lifesize is an essential part of that equation.”

HEADQUARTERS

Austin, Texas, USA
+1 512 347 9300
Toll Free US +1 877 543 3749

EMEA REGIONAL OFFICE

Munich, Germany
+49 89 20 70 76 0
Toll Free Europe +00 8000 999 09 799

APAC REGIONAL OFFICE

Singapore
+65 6303 8370



www.lifesize.com
E-mail: info@lifesize.com



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