



Case Study

University of Houston – Sugar Land

University of Houston – Sugar Land (UHSL) is a single institution center for the University of Houston (UH). Located in Sugar Land, Texas, about 24 miles southwest of the main UH campus, UHSL has about 1,500 students, 50 faculty, and 35 staff on the campus.

UH is a Carnegie-designated Tier One public research university, known for world-class research, academic excellence, an exceptional student body, and the highest levels of innovation, creativity and scholarship. As a single institution center of UH, UHSL is able to leverage these strengths and provide programs of academic excellence for the southwest Houston metropolitan area and Fort Bend County, Texas.

Challenge

Back in 1999, UH and the UH System were using Instructional Television, or ITV, as the primary video model to deliver classes remotely. They also used legacy video conferencing equipment but experienced many challenges with it. Not only was it very expensive, it was difficult to operate and required a staff member trained specifically in telecommunications in order to initiate and receive calls, and support the technology.

In early 2013, with advancements in campus network and video conferencing technology, John McKee, Technical Services Manager for UHSL, and his team were challenged to plan, organize and implement a new video resource project for UHSL.

During an 18-month feasibility study that included comprehensive surveys and a focus group comprised of UHSL faculty and staff, John and his team uncovered the primary needs for their video delivery system: provide a high quality audio and video infrastructure that was cost effective to integrate with the newest technology, simple to operate for both students, faculty, and I.T. support staff, flexible enough to provide multiple connection methods, and standardized across the campus and connecting sites.

Solution

Armed with their requirements, John's team sought out a solution that would meet their needs. They met with several vendors and ultimately decided that IDVideo Phone, a cloud based video conferencing service built on the Vidyo infrastructure, would best meet their needs.

UHSL chose IDVideoPhone service, specifically the IDVP-Plus account, which is able to provide high definition video and audio delivery, including content sharing, in a manner that was easy to connect for I.T. staff, and easy to use for students and faculty. The previous hard codec model utilized a proprietary system and the challenges of supporting that model were extremely costly and had constant connectivity and quality problems. The H.264 SVC in the Vidyo product was far superior to the H.264 AVC in their old unit.

Results

In addition to UHSL, this model was deployed at another campus in Katy, Texas and the University of Houston – Victoria campus in Victoria, Texas. There were a total of 13 endpoint classrooms and 5 endpoint conference rooms that accessed the IDVP-Plus service. Over 400 students attended classes by academic videoconferencing. In addition, the UH School of Nursing's Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) program piloted the IDVP-Plus service over iPad's at clinical locations in the greater Houston area and in Victoria, Texas.

"End users have easily adopted to the Vidyo product using the IDVP-Plus service. We are constantly complimented on the quality, flexibility, and ease of connectivity of IDVP-Plus," John explained.

The cost of implementing and delivering this model was about a third of the cost of other systems. Incidents with delivery have declined over 70% over the last 2 years and the negative feedback on academic videoconference classes is almost nothing.

"I don't worry anymore about connectivity issues. I don't care what kind of equipment they have, whether it's legacy equipment, desktop or

laptop computer, an iPad or even just a cellphone. I can connect people together. That's the beauty of what IDSolutions service offers us."

In the future, John plans to add recording capabilities and on-demand options to their program. "We continue to look for ways that content collaboration can be enhanced. Our ultimate goal is to be able to provide service regardless of the academic program's needs. We do not want to be wed to a propriety format that cannot adapt to whatever delivery method a program or faculty member wants to use."

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