



HOW DO YOU COMMUNICATE?™
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UF UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

“Video conferencing is the simplest, most cost efficient and reliable way of connecting and driving collaboration among our faculty and students.”

Customer: University of Florida, Health Science Center

Location: Gainesville, FL

Challenge: Overcoming physical, financial and geographical constraints to facilitate distant learning and remote content sharing and collaboration across its student body.

Solution: VSGi Video Conferencing Solutions

Results: VSGi solutions have enabled educators and students to connect and interact, raising standards of collaborative communication, while facilitating a more productive and affordable education experience.

Changing the Face of Learning

Connecting Remote Classrooms and Enhancing Access to Curricular Content

Recognized as world-leader in academic health and inter-disciplinary research for over 50 years, the University of Florida Health Science Center (UF-HSC) located in Gainesville, FL, is the country's only academic health center with six colleges, five major research centers and institutes – all situated in a single, contiguous campus.

And while the Gainesville campus supports much of UF-HSC's education and research activities, the Center also maintains a close affiliation with Shands Healthcare academic hospitals in Gainesville and Jacksonville, as well as numerous educational, clinical and research affiliates across the state.

Maintaining its educational excellence while providing ease-of-access to curricular content

across these multiple sites, however, required a new approach to learning.

The Challenge: Keeping Student Bodies Connected and Productive – Wherever they Are!

With a growing student population of more than 6,000 students – much of it increasingly engaged in distance learning, off site clinical trials and medical practice – UF-HSC has long pioneered the use of video conferencing to empower faculty staff to extend their education reach and bring disparate communities of students closer together.

As FL-HSC, Teaching Laboratory Resources, Videoconference Coordinator, John Hughes explains: “Many of our students simply don't have the money to

travel to the Gainesville campus to attend class from their remote locations like Tallahassee, Jacksonville, or Orlando – and those who do, risk losing hours of critical research time.”

However, a remote faculty or student body was only part of the problem for UF-HSC administrators.

The University also had to deal with growing physical property constraints, as Hughes explains: “Sometimes, it can be impossible to schedule the physical space needed for many of the classes that UF-HSC provides.”

He continued: “Physicality, in all its forms, became a growing problem for us. Overcoming its constraints, while still delivering a world-class connected and collaborative educational experience, became our mission.”

The Solution: Extending Learning with VSGi Video Conferencing Solutions

To achieve this mission, UF-HSC turned to industry leading systems integrator VSGi to implement a campus-wide and remotely integrated video conferencing solution based on industry-leading Polycom technology.

Bringing the classroom or meeting room experience directly and “physically” to its student body – wherever they are located – UF-HSC has now been working with VSGi for over 12 years.

“Our teaching methodologies have always been visual-based and video conferencing represented a natural progression for us,” said John Hughes. “It is also the simplest, most cost-efficient and reliable way of connecting and driving



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collaboration among our faculty and students across the state."

Today, UF-HSC has over 100 video conferencing units in place. Many of these units are dedicated to scheduled classroom presentations, while others support scheduled or "on-the-fly" video conferencing sessions across its 6,000 plus campus population.

Working on a "first name basis" with VSGi on implementation and support matters, Al Murray, Video Conference Engineer, coordinates day-to-day video conferencing services at UF-HSC. As such, Murray has witnessed widespread adoption and integration of the technology into almost every aspect of the daily curriculum and communication needs of UF-HSC.

The Result: Video Conferencing is now a "Fact of Learning"

Now a fully-embraced "fact of learning", video conferencing technology has enabled UF-HSC administrators and faculty to improve instruction, engage remote students and increase their

access to curricular content, all while delivering cost savings and increased productivity for students and teachers alike.

As John Hughes explains: "By enabling dispersed and scattered groups to meet simultaneously, while remaining in situ, VSGi's video conferencing solutions have helped our administrators, researchers, and students cut travel time and save money without sacrificing the imperative to be 'physically present' with each other."

Video conferencing is now such an integrated and high value asset at UF-HSC that its application has extended to making possible a whole host of scenarios including providing remote students and staff with real-time, virtual seats at mandatory "all-hands" meetings and events that they could not otherwise attend.

In fact, John Hughes and Al Murray are so pleased with the VSGi experience that they regularly share implementation and operation best practices with

other institutions in Gainesville (and beyond).

As Al Murray, explains: "There's a lot of mystery surrounding video conferencing, but it's not as hard as it seems - as long as you plan your implementation, work with your provider, engage your IT department and network security folks, and work as a team - when all this comes into play, video conferencing really isn't a terribly big challenge".

"And for us, the best indicator of success is that we rarely receive a complaint... which is why we like VSGi - the service and support they provide is so reliable. It's also the reason we have stayed with them as our video conferencing service provider for over a decade," said John Hughes.

The Future - "The Scope is Limitless"

According to FL-HSC's Teaching Laboratory Services team, the future potential for the application of video conferencing technology at the University is limitless.

"Because we know and trust that the technology can be adapted to many applications - when a college faculty or staff member has the incentive to realize rich new possibilities, we are always ready to help them achieve their goal," explained Hughes.

"Video conferencing allows people to connect - so the scope is limitless," continued Hughes. "And because the technology is so easy-to-use (almost like making a phone call) we are seeing more and more people using video conferencing for everyday point-to-point communications."

Contact VSGi to learn how our video conferencing solutions can support your college or university.

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