

Community College Connects Five Campuses with Converged Network

Netarx overhauls voice and data networks to cut costs and enhance availability

• SITUATION •

Macomb Community College, located in Warren, Michigan, serves 24,000 students through its five campuses. As the second-largest community college in Michigan, it offers two-year programs and four-year degrees through state and local universities that have close ties with the college.

Ten years ago, Dr. Norman Schlafmann joined the college as its new Vice President of Information, Research and Technology, with the goal of bringing the latest technology to the college. One major change was to completely remove the 20-year-old legacy data and voice networks and replace them with a converged network.

“We had an aging ATM data network, which was no longer being supported, and I had read that Gartner Group advised that private branch exchange phone systems would be obsolete by 2006,” says Schlafmann. “We were convinced it was time for a converged network.”

• SOLUTION •

Schlafmann preferred a Cisco solution because of the reliability and support, but conducted an open bidding process. The final two vendors were Cisco and Nortel. After reference site visits, both vendors were invited to compete in setting up a demo solution for IP voice. Cisco brought in Netarx, a Gold Certified Partner, to set up the demo. By midday on the first day, Netarx had dial tone with Cisco gear.

“Much consideration went into our final choice,” says Schlafmann. “We looked at issues of support, quality of technology, and available integrators, and we felt that Cisco and Netarx were better prepared.”

“Netarx impressed us with their creative ideas,” Schlafmann adds. “They had experience with deploying a similar system for another Michigan community college with great success.”

SOLUTION SUMMARY

A new Cisco converged network solution at Macomb Community College:

- Seamlessly links five campuses
- Simplifies management with a single network
- Eliminates outdated data and PBX systems
- Reduces operating costs

Netarx recommended a Cisco solution including IPCC Express, IP telephony, a GIG backbone, and fully meshed core. The Netarx team worked closely with the college’s IT team to plan a deployment that would not disrupt faculty or students and would deliver everything the college was seeking.

• RESULTS •

The deployment was on a tight schedule and instruction could not be interrupted. Netarx accommodated the challenging schedule by working during a semester break, and then overnight and weekends to avoid instructional time. Netarx also was responsible for two types of training: curriculum and administration to teach those who would manage the system.

Today the campuses of Macomb Community College are unified under one converged voice and data network. Staff and administration are no longer dialing seven-digit numbers to reach each other. From a support perspective, Schlafmann considers the converged network critical.

“This whole system is an exciting adventure for us,” says Schlafmann. “We are looking at rolling out wireless next, so we are reviewing pilot studies to see how we would manage that and provide security.”