The Computerworld Honors Program

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Final Copy of Case Study

LOCATION:
Washington, DC, US

YEAR:
2011

STATUS:
Laureate

CATEGORY:
Training/Education

ORGANIZATION:
University of Colorado, Colorado Springs

ORGANIZATION URL:
http://www.uccs.edu/

PROJECT NAME:
University of Colorado, Colorado Springs Nurse- Connect

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The University of Colorado, Colorado Springs (UCCS) has undergone a major technology platform shift in order to better serve the needs of its students, in particular the satellite students taking UCCS courses at local community colleges. The basis of the endeavor was rooted in a desire to further its distance education initiatives through the use of Cisco's TelePresence system, a virtual "in-person" meeting experience that uses sophisticated technologies to deliver a high quality collaborative experience. From that starting point, however, UCCS embarked on a multipronged technology transformation including digital signage and 21st century teleconferencing tools to provide each student in Colorado with standardized educational opportunities, regardless of location. As a major hub to dozens of community colleges throughout Colorado, UCCS has long sought to bring their superior educational offerings to the surrounding area. By implementing an advanced distance learning solution including the TelePresence platform, UCCS has been able to target its educational efforts toward attracting and retaining the areas best and brightest, particularly in the field of nursing. With a labor shortage in nursing throughout the area, its TeleNursing classes are enabling medical professionals in the area to receive world-class training close to home to better serve their local community. The fear of losing top-notch nurses to larger cities such as Denver and Bolder is mitigated by the ability to reach out into the local community.

SOCIETAL BENEFITS

With the majority of nurses from rural areas migrating to either Denver or Boulder for their educational training never to return home, local clinics are being left short staffed. Using TelePresence, students are now able to receive a top-tier education without having to leave their communities, addressing this crucial labor shortage.

PROJECT BENEFIT EXAMPLE

The need for top-tier nursing talent in the local community has been evident in rural areas across the nation for some time, and it is exactly these type of local needs that UCCS has taken upon itself to address. The University's technology leadership observed a TelePresence demonstration by Cisco, and immediately recognized the potential to harness this new solution to address the labor shortage in their area. The University leadership engaged Cisco directly, who were able to offer a series of solution to address the 21st learning goals of the University administration. "The need for this type of technology came from all of the different clinics, the nursing programs, and the students themselves," said Jerry Wilson, CTO and Executive Director of IT for UCCS. "Clinics were saying they needed nurses and we don't have them. If they send people up to Colorado Springs or Denver to get their degree, they don't come back to work in their local communities once they are done with school. So we needed to create the infrastructure to staff the people needed at the local clinics."

IS THIS PROJECT AN INNOVATION, BEST PRACTICE? Yes

ADDITIONAL PROJECT INFORMATION

The University and its partners see this as a launching point for a technology revolution within the University of Colorado system. There are ongoing efforts to reach out to additional small rural communities, offering accredited courses to an ever-expanding constituency. "I think it's going to change the way we deliver education," says Jerry Wilson, CTO and Executive Director of IT for UCCS.