

Online classes now replicate the feel of face-to-face learning

At Fox School of Business, WebEx is fulfilling the promise of e-learning

THE FOX SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AT TEMPLE University in Philadelphia has been offering its entire MBA curriculum online for nearly a decade, but in recent years it became clear that the e-learning experience was not as interactive or collaborative as faculty members wanted. “We needed our online courses to capture the same energy as our live classrooms,” said John DeAngelo, the school’s associate dean of information technology.

After evaluating several systems for online collaboration, the school selected WebEx. Other platforms either placed limits on the number of participants or didn’t offer high-quality VoIP, DeAngelo said. WebEx stood out, he explained, because of its highly interactive tools, its support for large numbers of users and its ease of use. In addition, recalled DeAngelo, “We knew that WebEx was widely accepted by the business community, and this was an important factor for us.”

As the primary faculty member spearheading the interactive e-learning effort, Darin Kapanjie was the first to use WebEx Training Center. To make the interaction in his online business calculus classes exactly the same as his in-person courses, Kapanjie secured a grant that provided each student with a VoIP headset, a Wacom tablet, and a webcam. Using their tablets and digital pens, students handwrite their calculations. “With the WebEx pass control feature, students can share their desktops and show me and the rest of the class how they arrived at a solution,” Kapanjie said. “Students complete and submit handwritten exams through WebEx as well.”

Kapanjie’s success is leading other faculty members to create online classes using WebEx. The Fox School has also adopted both WebEx Training Center and WebEx Meeting Center to conduct administrative meetings with satellite campuses located around the world.

By improving the quality of distance learning at The Fox School, WebEx provided the school with a competitive advantage and helped it maintain its position as an innovator in business education, according to DeAngelo. “Most business schools provide a passive distance learning program, much like the one we used to offer,” he said. “WebEx made it possible for us to

create a very attractive online offering that fully replicates the face-to-face learning experience for our students.”

WebEx also enabled The Fox School of Business to enhance its Executive Management Program. “We used WebEx to create small-group forums for junior executive students to meet remotely without faculty,” said DeAngelo. “Interactive methods such as this one enable students to continue learning in a collaborative way between class meetings.”

WebEx also enabled The Fox School to extend the reach of its

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high-quality educational offerings while optimizing faculty time. In the past, when faculty members traveled between the school’s worldwide campuses, they were unable to continue teaching. “Thanks to WebEx, our professors can now teach their classes from wherever they are,” stated DeAngelo.

As more and more faculty members move their online classes to WebEx, The Fox School of Business has ambitious goals for the future. The school plans to make both undergraduate and graduate degrees available online through WebEx while developing new certificate programs for underserved student populations, such as working mothers. And as one of the largest Blackboard installations in the country, The Fox School plans to utilize the built-in Blackboard integration features in WebEx.

“There’s so much we’ve done with WebEx,” said DeAngelo, “but the opportunities are endless.”

For more information about WebEx applications for higher education, please visit www.webex.com/go/learning.