

COMCAST BUSINESS SERVICES HELPS A MULTI-CAMPUS LEARNING LEADER CLOSE THE DISTANCE



SITUATION

- West Virginia Northern Community College (WVNCC), largest higher education institution in the region, with more than 3,000 students and faculty
- Main campus in Wheeling; additional campuses in Weirton and New Martinsville

CHALLENGE

- Overcome reliability and connectivity issues between the campuses to permit online access to classes, learning tools and other school information from any of the college's three locations

SOLUTION

- Comcast Business Services Ethernet Private Line
- Comcast Ethernet Dedicated Internet

RESULTS

- Connectivity and reliability problems solved
- New learning opportunities for WVNCC students and faculty
- Managed costs for the school

Comcast Metro Ethernet links West Virginia Northern Community College's three campuses for quality instruction

DISTANCE OBSTRUCTS DISTANCE LEARNING AT WVNCC WITH UNRELIABLE CONNECTIVITY

West Virginia Northern Community College (WVNCC), home to an educational community of three thousand students, staff and faculty, has been an economic engine for West Virginia for four decades. Its mission, "to provide higher education empowering individuals to achieve academic and career goals leading to a competent workforce which excels in a global economy," hasn't changed, but the way education is delivered has.

WVNCC's three campuses in Wheeling, Weirton and New Martinsville were linked to permit students in one location to take classes from the other two. Stephen Lippiello, Vice President of Administrative Services/CFO, says, "We had the necessary hardware to transmit classes between our campuses, but we struggled with our connectivity and reliability. Our ISP was just unreliable."

COMCAST BUSINESS SERVICES CONNECTS WVNCC'S CAMPUSES FOR RELIABLE RESOURCE SHARING

WVNCC's campuses are about an hour apart from each other, and naturally the school tried to unite them virtually so that students at one could attend classes at another. Robert DeFrancis, Dean of Community Relations, says, "We were one of the first institutions in the state to make it possible for classes to be taught and transmitted to the other locations, but it was costly and problematical." He remembers classrooms filled with eager students hoping to leverage the IP Video link from another campus – and getting static. "The poor connections were extremely irritating – we even had several students drop their classes because of our lack of connectivity between campuses. We knew that we needed to make an improvement, and we found that improvement with Comcast."

Comcast Business Services' Ethernet Private Line now connects WVNCC's campuses. Comcast Ethernet Dedicated Internet line supports students and faculty with instant, reliable access to the Internet and its video streaming capabilities. The fast Internet speeds permit WVNCC professors like Joyce Britt to reach more students simultaneously. "IP video affords the opportunity for students at all three locations to participate simultaneously, overcoming challenges like travel or class size. This way you can pull all your students together. People hear you clearly and they can have the same quality of experience that they get in the classroom."

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*Robert DeFrancis
Dean/Community Relations
West Virginia Northern
Community College*

West Virginia Northern Community College did its homework before making the choice. “Comcast has a high credibility factor,” says Stephen Lippiello. “We asked about Comcast and received positive feedback about the service level, reliability and clarity. Comcast Business Services represented the best opportunity to support us for improved performance and reliability.”

COMCAST CLOSES THE DISTANCE FOR WVNCC STUDENTS

Connectivity and reliability problems solved

“Comcast has done a yeoman’s job in improving the quality of the transmission and the reliability of the connection supporting those classes,” says Robert DeFrancis. “There used to be problems for students connecting at campuses where Comcast isn’t the support,” agrees Britt. With that quality connectivity in place the promise of integrating multi-campus resources can be fulfilled.

New learning opportunities for WVNCC students and faculty

WVNCC’s goal, “to provide students with access to learning without limits of time, place or distance,” is now being met daily. Robert DeFrancis says, “We now can do things like record classes and make them available online to students who miss them – before that wasn’t possible. Now we do it routinely and it has helped our students who miss a class. They can get the full benefits of the classes online.” Quality connectivity has opened new opportunities for students whose time is precious and who couldn’t otherwise take advantage of classes on a WVNCC campus that’s miles from home. The new links make it easier for faculty to deliver instruction regardless of distance, and to deliver asynchronous instruction via the Web to students whose work hours or other obligations make it hard to attend classes.

Savings opportunities for the school

“We’re moving toward applying cloud computing for student records, admissions, etc.,” says Stephen Lippiello. “We’re transitioning the servers and looking at additional cloud-based applications – whatever we can do in that regard is of interest because we’re seeing potential cost savings in the overhead of running servers. We have some virtual machines and some early pilot programs in virtualizing. We’ll be expanding our efforts in this regard.”