

Web Conferencing Boosts Learning and Administration

Al Jouf University employs Cisco WebEx to establish first e-learning platform in Saudi Arabia.

Customer Name: Al Jouf University

Industry: Education

Location: Saudi Arabia

Number of Employees: 19,000 students and staff

Business Results

- Integration of geographically diverse sites
- More efficient use of teaching resource
- Students taking greater control of their learning



Case Study

Business Challenge

Founded in 2005, Al Jouf University is a modern institution dedicated to scientific research, and teaching. Its 12 colleges cover disciplines including medicine, engineering, and IT. Through high-quality academic programs, it aims to be recognized as one of the leading universities in Saudi Arabia.

With its campus not yet completed, the university operates from a number of buildings around Al Jouf's capital city, Sakakah, and in other towns across the sparsely populated northern region of Saudi Arabia. Eid M. Al-Mohammed, IT director at Al Jouf University, says: "The wide geographic distribution of university buildings created significant communications challenges for us. There were very few opportunities for research staff and students to share learning, or to collaborate on projects. Also, the university's departments are spread across many sites, and with limited resources, it was hard for them to meet regularly face-to-face to discuss important topics, such as administration and enrollment, or to review policy issues."

Under Saudi law, the university's male and female population must be taught separately, so it was often necessary for teaching staff to deliver the same lecture twice. This

requirement could mean a journey of up to 100 miles between sites, wasting valuable teaching time and incurring significant travel costs. Some journeys in the remote parts of the Kingdom also carried risks to the personal safety of staff travelling on their own.

As a relatively new institution, the university was also keen to establish academic and research links with other universities, both within the Kingdom and internationally. It is common for guest speakers to move between universities to deliver lectures, but the cost and time spent travelling to the Kingdom was often prohibitive, especially for many overseas institutions.

These problems were compounded by traditional video conferencing technology that made it impossible to share presentations or documents. There were few opportunities for interaction, so students watching lectures remotely did not receive the full experience, and it was not possible to record classes for re-use or revision purposes. There were connectivity issues, too. The limited bandwidth of point-to-point networks between sites often resulted in call failure or poor quality video.

Under the auspices of the Deanship of Electronic and Distance Learning, the university decided to establish an integrated educational system based on the latest communications technology, including virtual classrooms, e-forums, Internet, and collaborative tools.

"Now there are many ways to receive the same learning; you don't have to be there in the class. Using WebEx, students can see not only the teacher speaking via live video, but also the presentation being given. They can share documents, take part in group sessions, and ask questions. With the interactive whiteboard facility, they can even see on their screen what's being drawn on the whiteboard in the classroom."

Eid M. Al-Mohammed
IT Director, Al Jouf University

Web Conferencing Boosts Learning and Administration

Continued



Case Study

“WebEx saves us time and money, improves the quality of our teaching and planning, and enables us to collaborate with other institutions anywhere in the world. In short, it solves all our needs.”

Eid M. Al-Mohammed
IT Director, Al Jouf University

Solution and Results

Al Jouf University is the first university in Saudi Arabia to implement e-learning. At the heart of its new facility is the Cisco WebEx® Training Center Online Classroom. This web-based system is easy to implement and requires no up-front investment or additional software. It operates on both Windows and Mac operating systems, as well as a range of platforms including smartphones and tablets, across a reliable and secure Cisco infrastructure. Using Cisco® WebEx, the university can engage students with interactive, media-rich online learning, regardless of whether they are at another building, another city, or even at home.

“Now there are many ways to receive the same learning; you don’t have to be there in the class,” says Eid M. Al-Mohammed. “Using WebEx, students can see not only the teacher speaking via live video, but also the presentation being given. They can share documents, take part in group sessions, and ask questions. With the interactive whiteboard facility, they can even see on their screen what’s being drawn on the whiteboard in the classroom.”

The high-quality video features of Cisco WebEx include a full-screen mode, which enables participants to watch speakers in VGA quality without any other visual distractions.

During group sessions, up to six other participants' webcam videos can be displayed simultaneously on the screen.

Recorded Cisco WebEx classes are accessible via the Internet at any time, enabling students to take greater control of their own learning. If they miss a lecture, they can watch it later. They also have the option to watch repeat viewings to improve their understanding of a particular topic, or to revise for an exam. Furthermore, students can use Cisco WebEx to share medical and engineering applications, across the campus and with those studying the same subject at other institutions worldwide.

Cisco WebEx enables teachers to actively monitor student attendance and involvement in classes, and to conduct multiple, simultaneous group breakout sessions. They can use integrated assessment tools to test comprehension, track individual performance, and even share correct answers between students during classes.

Faculties and departments use Cisco WebEx Meeting Center, saving both time and money from travel avoidance, and reducing the university's carbon footprint. For the first time, teams can hold regular day-to-day meetings, becoming more productive and efficient through better communication.

Looking to the future, Al Jouf University is a much more attractive partner for global collaboration projects. Guest speakers can give lectures without the need for expensive travel, and research staff can establish quick and cost-effective links with their counterparts at other

universities. If specialist faculty members are required, they can be employed on a contract basis to deliver classes from wherever they are based.

Al Jouf University is sure it has chosen the right solution. Eid M. Al-Mohammed says: “WebEx saves us time and money, improves the quality of our teaching and planning, and enables us to collaborate with other institutions anywhere in the world. In short, it solves all our needs.”

Cisco WebEx Meeting Center High Quality Full-Screen Video Mode



- Active speaker main video area - up to 360p (640 x 360 quality)
- Active speaker switching
- See up to 5 other participants at a time. Scroll to see more

For More Information

To find out more about Cisco WebEx, please go to: www.cisco.com/go/webex