iLinc
Engage. Learn. Collaborate.

Case Study

MARIST COLLEGE REPLACES WEBEX™ WITH ILINC WEB CONFERENCING SOFTWARE TO REDUCE COSTS AND EXPAND ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE CAPABILITIES

Marist College, recognized for excellence by U.S. News & World Report, The Princeton Review, and Barron's Best Buys in College Education, is known for its leadership in the use of technology to enhance the teaching and learning process. In 2006, Marist was named one of the 25 "most connected campuses" in America by Forbes and The Princeton Review, and a "Campus Technology Innovator," one of only 16 such designations nationwide, by Campus Technology Magazine. Founded in 1929, Marist College is home to approximately 4,200 traditional undergraduates and more than 1,600 adult continuing education and graduate students.

CHALLENGE:

Find a WebEx™ replacement that would reduce costs, but provide greater functionality for delivering Web-based training and online student orientation sessions.

SOLUTION:

Implement iLinc Web conferencing software to eliminate monthly fees, expand usage, improve Web training tools, and reduce attrition rates.

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Director, Academic Technology and eLearning
Marist College

In addition to its commitment to the ongoing creation and development of online academic programs and coursework, Marist College launched the first New York state accredited online graduate degree program and built a world-class technology platform to support instructional, research, and administrative

initiatives through 20 years of strategic partnership with IBM. However, the college didn't utilize Web conferencing until 2004. The school relied on an asynchronous course management system for distance learning courses and a text-based chat system for real-time Web communications.

Recognizing that the college could benefit academically and administratively from instituting Web conferencing, a decision-making team began to examine leading providers. They selected WebEx™ and used the product for one year.

The experience taught them that the technology was indeed beneficial for learning and administration purposes; however, WebEx proved to be cost prohibitive. Marist needed a replacement solution that could provide equal or superior functionality, while reducingexpenditures.

Replacing WebEx with iLinc Web Conferencing Software

Based on a recommendation from the college's CIO, Marist turned to iLinc Communications for a solution. After analyzing iLinc's offerings and pricing model, Marist chose to replace WebEx. The college paid a one-time fee to own iLinc software, eliminating costly monthly fees.

Marist planned to use iLinc to deliver Web-based training on how to succeed in distance learning courses, as well as to offer live student orientation sessions.

"As we began to deploy the iLinc suite, we realized that we could get even broader use out of iLinc," said Joshua Baron, Director, Academic Technology and eLearning, Marist College. "We'd originally intended to use Web conferencing primarily to present training and orientations. Now, we're expanding our iLinc usage to support high-quality distance learning instruction as well as administrative events, such as advisory councils and Board meetings. This is the direction that we're heading."

Training Users for Long-term Success

After deployment, the Academic Technology and eLearning team focused on creating an iLinc training process to ensure proficiency in the organization's key users (students, faculty members, and administrators). They built original training materials, such as best practices documents to supplement training courses and tutorials offered by iLinc Communications.

"In general, our users tend not to be very technical, so we need to offer clear instruction. We created a turnkey program to guide users through iLinc's online training and then through our internal training. At that point, we 'certify' them as users," described Baron.

The training has proven successful as evidenced by the various programs and courses now offered by Marist College. For example, faculty members and marketing staff now host online open houses that draw even greater participation than live open houses. During these sessions, potential

students attend live iLinc meetings to learn details about particular degrees, courses, costs, etc. They can ask specific questions in a live, real-time environment, and in turn, faculty members can promote a course's attributes according to particular student needs.

Using iLinc to Improve Administration and Academics

With iLinc as with most other technology purchases, Marist endeavored to leverage the solution across administrative and academic functions. From an administrative perspective, the college now uses iLinc to host some of its Board of Trustees meetings. Because these meetings involve busy, high-profile members who may not have time to come to the campus, the online forum makes it easier to assemble key players.

"The president of the college has been in iLinc sessions," noted Baron. "Greater participation from high-level staff and the Board of Trustees has important ramifications, even if it means getting just one or two more people involved."

On academic side, educators are using iLinc to create a feeling of community among distance learning students. Because most distance learning courses are still presented asynchronously via the college's course management system, teachers are turning to iLinc orientation sessions to bring students together. Not only do they have greater technical capabilities (e.g. sharing applications, using markup tools, enabling synchronized Web

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browsing, etc.) to introduce the course, the interactive aspects of iLinc enable students to better connect to each other and to the instructor.

iLinc orientation sessions are proving financially beneficial to Marist as well, helping to markedly reduce attrition rates. Marist also predicts long-term ROI from iLinc as a result of returning students. The strategy is to ensure that students enjoy the online learning experience, making them more likely to return to Marist for additional and/or graduate degrees.

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Going forward, Marist College will begin to integrate iLinc Web conferencing software and audio conferencing solutions into its distance learning courses, such as the college's new Master of Science in Technology Management degree. Other initiatives include allowing students to give final presentations via iLinc and presenting guest speakers in iLinc sessions.

"Our iLinc Web conferencing programs have been very successful. We want to ramp up more activities like this," summarized Baron.

Learn More:

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