

## Positioning Paper

### Unified Communications for Education: Helping Knowledge Flow

Today's tech-savvy students are accustomed to being hyperconnected; they expect to have access to information anywhere, anytime, on any device, and in any format. As a result, they want admission to the colleges and universities that offer not only top-notch academics, but also the most modern communications technologies. In this competitive recruitment environment, providing students with advanced communications is crucial to enrolling, retaining and engaging the best of them. It means implementing wired and wireless connectivity and around-the-clock learning and service opportunities, and equipping a mobile, distributed faculty and staff that can collaborate with ease while reaching the right resources at the right time — regardless of location. To make it all happen your institution needs a fully integrated, reliable solution that decreases overhead and downtime.

Unified communications (UC) represent an unprecedented opportunity to streamline communications throughout campuses to meet the needs of today's

students, while reducing costs and creating new revenue opportunities. By integrating presence features, real-time communications and near-real-time communications into a single environment — a single desktop interface — students, teachers and administrators can all participate in an innovative model of learning that is connected, collaborative, secure and affordable.

#### Tools for the Personalized Learning Experience

While these digital-native students expect the best in technology, they also

expect a customized learning experience. Unified communications help your institution meet this expectation by offering personalized communications. For example, in an effort to provide support on demand to students, higher education institutions may decide to implement a “Tutors on Call” service. Using presence technology the service can enable students to know the availability of tutors or faculty and instantly connect via telephone, instant messaging or video. The presence information can include a range of details from whether a user is connected or not, to more advanced



information about users' availability, such as indicating whether the person is on a call or in a class. Presence also helps faculty and administration members provide and receive information on how they want to communicate with each other — by text, voice or instant message. In addition, unified communications enable institutions to create their own customized applications, which can interface with other systems on campus. This way, UC solutions grow as the needs of the campus does — with flexibility.

### **Simple, Instant Collaboration**

Because working with others is an integral part of learning, UC solutions for education should support dynamic collaboration. With UC, conferencing tools can be bundled into the price of a course, allowing students to create video, audio or Web conferences using any PC, on campus or off. Students can share documents simultaneously, and everyone can edit together in real time. Collaborative benefits extend to faculty and staff as well. For example, in the case of new

faculty orientation, online presence, instant messaging and click-to-call functions allow colleges and universities to offer instant support and access to experts from both IT and administrative sources, easing a new faculty member's transition.

### **Powerful Communications for Campus Safety**

National events in the recent past have put campus safety in the center of the higher education discourse. Unified communications solutions help maintain the safety of students, faculty and administration members in a number of critical ways. UC can allow campus security officers to receive messages, phone calls and voicemails on VoIP-enabled mobile devices — wherever and whenever — enabling them to respond to situations with speed. Additionally, UC can help notify the entire campus community of an emergency through devices of users' choosing by broadcasting messages rapidly to students, faculty and staff. Similarly, by publishing the

presence and availability of users, UC can ensure that key decision makers and administrative officials are easily located and available to respond in the event of a crisis. And when it comes to emergency planning among students and staff, UC helps people coordinate and share critical information efficiently.

### **Superior Mobility on Campus**

As institutions grow and establish separate campuses, staying mobile and connected isn't just a convenience anymore; it's a requirement for providing an enhanced and productive learning environment, attracting students and managing costs. With unified communications, students, faculty and staff can stay in contact no matter where they are, through simplified and personalized device interfaces. Students can take part in video-based courses and study sessions, while teachers can communicate through video, instant messaging, document sharing and whiteboarding. Professors can

## **Case Study: Unified Communications at Indiana University**

Indiana University is one of the largest universities in the U.S. with approximately 110,000 students and more than 18,000 employees. As students and faculty became increasingly more mobile, the university came to face a dilemma. Campus telephony was disconnected from mobile devices, and email overloaded the network. Lack of mobility tied faculty and staff to their desktops, but scarce office space demanded that more people work from home. There were disparate, multi-source solutions for email, voicemail, IM and conferencing. The data network didn't seem ready to support a unified solution, and all other choices were less than optimal.

In June of 2006 Nortel and Microsoft announced the Innovative Communications Alliance. This partnership has enabled the delivery of a unified communications solution that leverages Indiana University's existing skill set, knowledge and communications system, coupled with Microsoft's Exchange email environment. It allows the merging of campus IP communications onto one platform with geographic redundancy while providing for multiple migration paths for future expansion.

Since installation, the solution has driven a dramatic change in the communications experience for students, faculty and staff. Productivity is improved because users now have choices about how to communicate with others: via voice, video, IM and email. Presence management, call logging and click-to-communicate from any Microsoft® application help users stay in touch efficiently.



even serve as virtual mentors to newer faculty, allowing them to observe lectures and presentations via videoconference. Even more, institution committee members can meet online through quality audio or videoconference, and key leaders can hold meetings and make decisions efficiently, regardless of geography. With unified communications the campus is anywhere there is a network connection; and with intelligent call routing a user may personalize how and when communications occur. For example, a professor may set up “virtual office hours.” During that specified time, calls are routed to multiple devices and locations enabling the faculty member to be more responsive to students while remaining mobile.

### **Revenue-Generating Opportunities**

Students’ changing demands for advanced communications technologies can mean increased revenue opportunities for your institution. A school may choose to offer a service such as “Tutors on Call” through subscription, where mobile tutor or mentor accessibility becomes

a premium service that generates extra revenue. Unified communications can also boost revenue by supporting in-dorm conveniences, enabling students to access support for academic or administrative needs instantly. Institutions can also integrate entertainment and dining specials for instant click-to-order, such as fast-food delivery, by sending time-sensitive messages to users’ phones.

### **Nortel Unified Communications Solutions for Education: a Grade Above**

When you implement unified communications from Nortel, a leader in higher-education communications solutions, you provide your students, faculty and administration with a connected, collaborative and secure communications network that takes learning and teaching to the head of its class. These solutions can be integrated into existing network environments, eliminating the cost of replacing current systems and processes.

Gartner — a leading provider of research and analysis on the global information technology industry

— has positioned Nortel in the leader’s quadrant of its Unified Communications Magic Quadrant report, published August 20, 2007.

Through Nortel’s alliances with world-class enterprise software developers, including Microsoft and IBM, Nortel is delivering unified communications with value propositions that offer opportunities for higher education institutions to enhance collaboration, increase mobility and deliver new value to students, faculty and staff. For more information on unified communications solutions to get started planning your network transformation, visit [www.nortel.com/us](http://www.nortel.com/us) or [www.nortel.com/education](http://www.nortel.com/education).

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