Texas A&M College of Engineering Innovates with Citrix Solutions to Transform the Student Experience

The IT Department Replaces Traditional Computer Lab with Collaboration Room and Supports Mobile Devices

ANAHEIM, Calif.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--In today's digital learning environment, students expect to navigate their education in the same way that they manage their personal interactions and transactions. They demand a highly engaged and personalized experience - accessible via their preferred communication channels and devices - giving educational institutions that can deliver on these expectations a competitive advantage. Texas A&M, the largest university in the state of Texas, with about 60,000 students at the main campus and 17,000 students in the College of Engineering, turned to Citrix to transform the educational experience for engineering students by introducing new innovative options for how they securely access their critical apps.

The IT team leading the College of Engineering was looking for a way to allow students to bring in their own personal devices or use university-supplied Chromebooks while ensuring the interoperability of existing technologies and security of these devices regardless of where they are used. With Citrix virtualization solutions Citrix XenApp and XenDesktop, and Citrix networking solution NetScaler ADC, they enabled student access to applications and data while maintaining the control and security that IT required. They also created an engineering environment that allowed them to replace traditional physical desktop computers in the computer labs with zero clients, which use far less power and can last an average of eight years or more. Immediately, the feedback from students was an enthusiastic demand for more of this technology that gave them the freedom to work as they were accustomed to - from any mobile device, in any location - whether in the lab, in a dorm room or in a coffee shop.

As the College of Engineering team continued to expand the concept to other labs and classrooms, they began to prove the value of their idea and became known as innovators across the university. As a result, group leaders around the university were willing to fund the IT team's next big idea - a new kind of computer lab that resembled the collaborative workspace typical of today's high-tech corporations. The team created a new physical space by altering the design of the room to support a diverse set of activities from independent study to collaboration on group projects. Instead of a room comprised of traditional rows of desktop computers on tables, open spaces with inviting seating and empty tables were created. In these new flexible spaces, students can bring and use their own personal devices or the university-supplied Chromebooks, all while still securely accessing the same robust engineering software they previously could only use on the desktops in the computer lab. Students enjoy the same great results, but with an improved user experience. Transforming the labs into a more digital setting is building innovation into how they are talking about issues, and what they are doing to solve them by allowing them to get into new and creative areas of discussion. And according to Forrester, reorganizing physical workspaces to foster collaboration and mobility is a trend on the rise among many universities.¹

Enabling a new way of learning not only inspires creativity and simplifies the lives of students, it supports the university's larger goal of preparing students to successfully transition into the business world by offering them similar ways of working. And by saving the IT team time that used to be spent refreshing PCs every three years, they can now focus on new creative IT projects supporting their anticipated growth to an enrollment of nearly 25,000 students spread out across Texas by 2025.

Quotes

Mark Henry, Manager of Virtualization and Learning Technologies for the College of Engineering, Texas A&M

"We've adopted Citrix solutions to create a virtual workspace that allows our students and faculty to access apps and data from any location at any time. We've also renovated our computer lab to function as a collaborative space, rather than as a traditional lab with desktops. As a result, our IT team has noticed that the ability for students to get into a more creative setting has changed their way of thinking when collaborating on school work. And what's great about Citrix solutions is that they allowed us to offer this flexibility without sacrificing security."

Related Links

1 Video: Texas A&M + Citrix
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1 Forrester's Global Business Technographics Mobility Survey, 2016 - 32% of respondents from universities say that reorganizing physical workspaces to foster collaboration and mobility of workforce is a high priority.