



Minnesota
STATE COLLEGES
& UNIVERSITIES

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—Karen Bergmeier, ITS Project Leader, Series 25 & WebEx & Project Liaison Connect-ED



WebEx helps MNSCU improve collaboration across 53 campuses.



INDUSTRY

Higher education

WEBEX APPLICATIONS

WebEx Meeting Center, Training Center, Event Center, Support Center

SUMMARY

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities needed a better way to collaborate across its 53 campuses. WebEx solutions enable constant communication between campus staff, faculty, students, and administrators, while saving the time and expense of travel. As a result, MNSCU has been able to streamline state-wide operations, expedite technical problem resolution, and increase access to a higher level of learning quality.

ABOUT MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Line of Business

Higher education

Headquarters

St. Paul, MN

Number of Employees

18,000

Target Market

Students and business and industry

WebEx Customer Since 2002

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities function as a unified system comprised of 53 campuses, including 25 community and technical colleges and seven state universities. Offering more than 3,500 educational programs, MNSCU has approximately 374,000 enrolled students. In addition to academic programs, the MNSCU system also offers continuing career education, providing customized training to more than 140,000 business and industry employees annually.

The Challenge

When Minnesota's higher education institutions merged to form one centralized Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, close collaboration between the state's 53 campuses became imperative. "Our campus IT and Chancellor offices are located five to six hours away from each other, making frequent in-person meetings not feasible," says Karen Bergmeier, ITS Project Leader, Series 25 and WebEx and Project Liaison Connect-ED for MNSCU.

In 2002, Bergmeier was responsible for training the MNSCU campuses on the system's proprietary software. "I would travel four or five hours to conduct training and then turn around and drive home. I did this two or three times each week," she recalls. The MNSCU Information Technology Services Office had a small deployment of WebEx Meeting Center in place, and Bergmeier began using it to conduct online trainings and user support. She realized immediately that a comprehensive online web collaboration solution would not only help her decrease travel time and expense, but would also improve collaboration within the entire MNSCU system.

The Solution

In order to choose the right solution for an MNSCU system-wide deployment, Bergmeier evaluated several solutions including WebEx and Macromedia Breeze. She explains, "We chose WebEx because it provides a strong backbone, operating on an independent network that ensures maximum security and reliability. With WebEx, we're also able to receive a broad range of solutions from one unified vendor." To meet a wide variety of needs, MNSCU chose to implement WebEx Meeting Center, WebEx Support Center, Event Center, and WebEx Training Center throughout its many campuses.

Today, MNSCU uses WebEx Support Center to provide continuous service to students and faculty using the state-wide Learning Management System (LMS), as well as helpdesk support for all employees. "When students, faculty, or staff call our helpdesk, we launch a WebEx Support Center session and immediately take control of their desktops. WebEx Support Center enables us to address their technical problems within 30 seconds of receiving a support call," says Bergmeier.

MNSCU uses Meeting Center to conduct a broad range of campus- and state-wide meetings that improve staff collaboration. "Our information technology group consists of CIOs and deputies from 32 institutions across the state, and this group now uses Meeting Center to conduct bi-weekly meetings," says Bergmeier. In addition, the Human Resources department at MNSCU uses Meeting Center for training and support of new employees, while the Chancellor's Office conducts academic fairs and a variety of faculty and staff meetings online.



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WebEx Training Center and Event Center also play a key role in keeping employees well-informed and trained on MNSCU's internal systems. "We use WebEx to roll out changes and updates on our student information system software to IT development, business analyst, and customer service staff," explains Bergmeier. And instead of traveling, she now uses WebEx extensively to train employees on the Resource25™ class and event scheduling system.

As more faculty, students, and staff experience WebEx sessions, WebEx adoption is gaining strong momentum throughout the MNSCU system. Now, a number of faculty use a combination of WebEx solutions to conduct student office hours from home. Bergmeier adds, "CIOs are beginning to ask for WebEx roll-outs on their campuses, and I'm conducting more and more WebEx demos for employees who are interested in finding out more."

The Benefits

WebEx helped MNSCU improve the quality of employee communications and collaboration and gain the full benefits of operating a state-wide system. According to Bergmeier, "WebEx provides a personal connection between MNSCU staff. Meetings that occurred once a quarter in the past, now take place instantly as needed." To track project status, MNSCU often holds daily WebEx meetings. "WebEx enables us to leverage the benefits of our state-wide system fully, facilitating staff and vendor meetings in which critical planning and negotiations take place," she says.

As a result of implementing WebEx, MNSCU also experienced improvements in the quality of learning it provides to students. "Because WebEx increases convenience and provides a personal, interactive approach, faculty-student office hours are much more productive," says Bergmeier. In addition, quicker resolution of support issues translates into better quality of learning. "The ability to resolve issues immediately with WebEx—such as helping a student access the LMS system or a faculty member to upload a syllabus—significantly contributes to elevating the quality of learning we offer," she says.

WebEx enabled MNSCU staff to save time, improve productivity, and increase customer satisfaction. "WebEx dramatically reduces the time required to resolve support tickets, enabling us to address more calls in a shorter amount of time. In August, we connected with a total of 386 students, faculty and staff using WebEx," states Bergmeier. Before WebEx, in-person campus visits could be unproductive. In one instance, Bergmeier drove three hours to conduct training and found that the staff really needed training on another system module when she arrived. She says, "WebEx online sessions now provide complete flexibility, enabling us to make changes to training on the fly and optimizing our time. As a result, I've cut travel by 90% and our customers are more satisfied with the quality of support and training I provide."

The Future

MNSCU plans to leverage a number of WebEx capabilities to continue to improve the quality of learning. "WebEx Training Center will help us create a more dynamic eLearning program, enabling students located throughout the state to benefit fully from online classes offered by any campus," explains Bergmeier. The WebEx recording feature will also play a key role in facilitating teaching. "For example, our nursing faculty may record sessions demonstrating how to read ultrasounds and post the recordings for on-demand access by students," she says. Bergmeier also sees great benefits from using the WebEx Training Center Hands On Lab feature. "Hands On Lab would enable us to stack computers in a closet and offer students hands-on computer classes they could take from their homes." She adds, "We're finding that the applications for WebEx are endless."

HIGHLIGHTS

WebEx helped MNSCU improve the quality of employee communications and collaboration and gain the full benefits of operating a state-wide system.

WebEx expedited technical problem resolution and provided interactive teaching sessions that improved the quality of learning.

WebEx enabled MNSCU staff to cut travel, resulting in dramatic time-savings, improved productivity, and increased customer satisfaction.