

Scottsdale Community College Case Study

NETOP SCHOOL SETS TONE FOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AT SCOTTSDALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Over the past few years students and instructors at Scottsdale Community College have been using NetOp School for their computer lab software needs and have found the software so valuable they have expanded its use throughout all the college's computer labs. After upgrading from their outdated hardware solution to lab management, NetOp School has led to increased productivity and cost savings.

The need to keep students on task in a computer lab had become a complicated and expensive proposition at Scottsdale Community College, a two-year college located in a suburb of Phoenix, Arizona. Grant Gagnon, director of college technology had to contend with a bulky and complicated "cobweb" system to provide for more than 12,000 students enrolled at the college.

The old hardware solution for lab management involved using different video signal connections to display each student's monitor giving the teacher an idea of who was keeping on task in class and who was using the computer to play games, browse the Internet or instant message. The complicated system was expensive to run and involved a switchboard-type connector to check on each student.

The institution places a high value on quality education with a faculty-student ratio of one to 20 and 23 percent of instructors with a doctoral degree. To have an equally impressive computer lab environment, Gagnon needed a new solution. After looking at various options, he found NetOp School to fit in with the college's needs, in terms of ease-of-use, cost and functionality. It has proven to be a wise decision in the long run.

"NetOp School has given us tremendous cost savings over our previous system," said Gagnon. "Both in terms of time and money saved, the software has been a great success."

The software works by placing an image of each student's monitor on the instructor's screen, while at the same time putting an image of the instructor's screen on the students' computers. In this way, the instructor can view what each student is doing while effectively demonstrating concepts and methods of solving problems in class. Each student has an excellent view of how the instructor is using his or her computer and can follow along with the demonstration in real-time.

"The key benefit is that it sets the tone for the learning environment," said Gagnon. "We cannot monitor all distractions within a class, such as cell phones or PDAs, but the software creates an atmosphere which gets the students serious about learning."

Instructors also have the ability to share one student's screen with everyone else, engaging the classroom by enabling interaction and participation. If a student has solved a problem in a new way that may be easier to understand, the instructor can allow that student to demonstrate the concept to the rest of the class by displaying his or her screen to the rest of the students.

The software also has the ability to produce and distribute quizzes and homework to the class. These are completely configurable by the instructor and allow one-click distribution and collection, ensuring timely and effective reporting of results.

Gagnon found the software simple to install and after initial training from NetOp staff, the college now has the ability to deploy NetOp software quickly and easily. In fact, the software was such a hit that Gagnon and his team have installed NetOp School in 12 different classrooms, with an average of 24 student computers and one instructor computer within each, meaning the software is installed on over 200 computers.

NetOp School is now used in the lab at the social behavior building and also in the school for library instruction, teaching the students how to use online databases and access research materials.

"We don't get a lot of service calls," said Gagnon about the easy-to-use NetOp School interface. Instructors are given a one-hour orientation and training seminar and then use NetOp School in their own personalized way. Some instructors use all the features of the software while others use it just for monitoring students in class.

Either way says Gagnon, "we are definitely satisfied."