Instructors and students learning together.

Saint Mary's College optimizes online learning with mission-based technology and innovative faculty certification program.

"Other online conferencing platforms we tried, and we tried many, couldn't support the seamless experience that Adobe Connect provides. The technology does not get in the way of achieving our educational goals."

Professor Barry Eckhouse, Special Assistant to the Provost for eLearning/Director of Technology & Online Programs at the School of Economics and Business Administration, Saint Mary's College of California

SOLUTION

Adobe Connect

MeetingOne Audio Integration

RESULTS

Delivers **SEAMLESS** online learning experiences

Supports institutional **TEACHING** mission

ENGAGES students with advanced features

ATTRACTS more students

St. Mary's College of California

Established: 1863

Students: 4,000

Moraga, California

www.stmarys-ca.edu

Partner

MeetingOne

www.meetingone.com

CHALLENGES

· Creating effective virtual course offerings

· Successfully training faculty to use eLearning resources

· Attracting new students and creating new revenue streams

The teaching mission in motion

The spirit of Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, the patron saint of teachers, is alive and well in Moraga, California. It's also thriving online.

Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle was a Catholic priest who in 1680 pioneered the integration of secular and religious lessons, their delivery in classrooms rather than private instruction, and teaching students in their native languages instead of Latin. He also established a community of educators, the Brothers of the Christian Schools, who are Catholics dedicated to education.

The city of Moraga in the San Francisco Bay Area is home to Saint Mary's College of California, a liberal arts college that continues to promote Lasallian and Christian Brothers ideals such as social responsibility, faith, education, respect, and inclusivity. Saint Mary's currently offers 43 undergraduate and graduate degree programs to a student body of more than 4,000.

In much the same way that de La Salle was a pioneer of classroom education, Saint Mary's is a pioneer of virtual classroom education. The College's School of Economics and Business Administration (SEBA) began offering online courses for its Executive MBA (EMBA) program in 2004.

"Saint Mary's is a college with a very clear mission, which is to put students at the center of our work," says Professor Barry Eckhouse, Special Assistant to the Provost for eLearning and Director of Technology and Online Programs at the School of Economics and Business Administration, Saint Mary's College of California. "Before the EMBA program started, we debated whether we were using technology effectively and attracting new students, looked at the education landscape, and considered the future. Then we devised an online MBA program that, at the time, was the only thing like it in the Bay Area. We found there was a real need for professionals to earn an advanced degree while continuing to work."

The Saint Mary's hybrid EMBA program combined online virtual classrooms and in-classroom learning to provide an ideal mix of convenience and in-person interaction. By addressing the scheduling needs of working professionals, the degree program also helped Saint Mary's SEBA boost enrollment, add a new revenue stream, and expand its service area.

A platform for effective learning

To deliver a high-quality virtual classroom experience, SEBA needed a web conferencing platform with the functionality and flexibility to engage learners and facilitate collaboration. The EMBA program's original corporate underwriters, which included Clorox, Wells Fargo, and Marsh & McLennan, didn't require much, but they did ask that SEBA's hybrid class have the same strong emphasis on business teams and teamwork as its on-campus classes.

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Professor Barry Eckhouse, Special Assistant to the Provost for eLearning and Director of Technology and Online Programs at the School of Economics and Business Administration, Saint Mary's College of California

SEBA tried different platforms, but each had limitations when it came to collaboration, such as requiring one call-in number and ID for the class, and another for breakout sessions or study groups. At an educational conference it hosts (see www.embatech.com), SEBA learned how Adobe Connect was being used for school recruitment and interviewing, enabling participants from multiple locations to attend interactive open houses in one unified, uninterrupted experience.

"Other online conferencing platforms we tried, and we tried many, couldn't support the seamless experience that Adobe Connect provides," Eckhouse says. "The technology does not get in the way of establishing learning groups or achieving our educational goals."

Unlike other platforms, Adobe Connect has breakout rooms instructors can pre-format for consistent course delivery. Students can smoothly transition between instructor-led discussions and separate study groups, and content persistence allows instructors to reuse virtual classrooms.

SEBA also engaged Adobe Connect Gold Partner, MeetingOne, to obtain high-performance audio integration. The web and audio solutions provider's integrated telephony capabilities follow users as they move from the main virtual classroom to sub-rooms and back without interruption.

"The breakout groups we have created with Adobe Connect and MeetingOne are in some ways at least comparable to the ones we achieve in our physical classrooms," says Eckhouse. "In fact, they may be better in certain situations. In the past, before we went online, students would negotiate with their groups so that no one had to drive far to meet in person. I don't hear that anymore."

Giving faculty the keys

With the right technology in place, Saint Mary's SEBA set to the task of optimizing the hybrid class experience. Teachers at a college steeped in more than 300 years of educational traditions might be expected to excel in the classroom. But they learned that those experiences don't always translate successfully to the digital world.

In 2010, Professor Eckhouse and a team of colleagues representing some of the top business schools nationally, began to identify the competencies required for successfully teaching online. Over the next four years, Saint Mary's developed its renowned Digital Driver's License (DDL) program, which certifies the College's instructors in how to create and manage digital coursework and master all the underlying technologies. As a result, Saint Mary's EMBA program, enhanced by the DDL, has received several awards and distinctions, including: The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) International Award for Innovations that Inspire; a ranking of 5th in California and 83rd in the United States by *U.S. News & World Report*; and a ranking of 16th in the world by *CEO* magazine.

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Professor Barry Eckhouse, Special Assistant to the Provost for eLearning and Director of Technology and Online Programs at the School of Economics and Business Administration, Saint Mary's College of California

SOLUTION AT A GLANCE

Adobe Connect

MeetingOne Audio Integration

For more information
www.adobe.com/products/adobeconnect.html

www.ddlpro.com

www.embatech.com

http://seba.tech

Adobe Systems Incorporated
345 Park Avenue
San Jose, CA 95110-2704
USA
www.adobe.com

"The Digital Driver's License program is designed to introduce faculty to new media authoring," says Eckhouse. "It also—and importantly—focuses on the pedagogy underlying how they use technology so it supports the academic teaching mission of SEBA and Saint Mary's College."

For instance, the DDL program encourages a "flipped class" model of teaching in which professors provide recorded lectures to students, and then the topic is discussed during the live virtual class. The instructor facilitates discussion around the topic and can use Adobe Connect features such as whiteboarding, annotation, chat, and polling to augment the discussion.

More than 100 faculty members at Saint Mary's, both within SEBA and in departments outside the business school, have received DDL certification, and several institutions have indicated an interest in sending their faculty for certification. Some faculty members now use Adobe Connect to host virtual office hours and students have begun requesting access to rooms for after-hours study groups.

Although Adobe Connect is not the only digital learning solution available to instructors at Saint Mary's College, as the DDL also includes instruction in multimedia production and other collaboration technologies, Adobe Connect breakout rooms are increasingly popular.

"Our more accomplished instructors prepare their Adobe Connect rooms just like they might prep physical classrooms," says Eckhouse. "Imagine a classroom with four problems on whiteboards for four study groups. Instructors can build the same thing in Adobe Connect, with the added benefit of easily using it over and over, saving time and effort."