Connecting a diverse university community online.

Customized eLearning tools help the University of Arizona educate students of all abilities on all devices.

University of Arizona

eSyncTraining

"We use Adobe Connect to help instructors be even more creative about teaching and achieving learning objectives."

Mark Felix, Director of Instructional Support, University of Arizona

SOLUTION

Adobe Connect

RESULTS

30K **USERS** logged in during first 15 months

Promotes educational **CREATIVITY**

6K Meeting rooms **BUILT**

Improved **ACCESSIBILITY** for all students

University of Arizona

Established: 1885

Students: 43,000

Tucson, Arizona

www.arizona.edu

eSyncTraining

www.esynctraining.com

CHALLENGES

- Complying with regulations that require eLearning access for students with physical or developmental disabilities
- Finding a virtual classroom solution that integrates with its existing learning management systems (LMS)
- Leveraging online meeting tools for purposes beyond academics

"We needed a synchronous online meeting tool to support both active learning and small-group work. We also wanted a virtual classroom that could be customized. Adobe Connect offered these capabilities and more."

Mark Felix, Director of Instructional Support, University of Arizona

Innovation without boundaries

Before Arizona was a state, there was the University of Arizona. Being ahead of the times still defines the University of Arizona (UA), and is a major reason it has become a leading public research university exploring fundamental questions about science, medicine, the arts, and business.

The UA also continues to expand teaching, research, service, and innovation beyond the boundaries of its main campus in Tucson. UA Online, the university's distance learning program, offers nearly 70 undergraduate and graduate degree and certificate programs. In the fall 2016 semester, the UA learning management system (LMS) also holds more than 4,300 courses used by the university's 19 colleges.

A few years ago, the UA decided to look for alternatives to the Java-based web conferencing solution it used for eLearning, as the university had difficulty getting student computers ready for Java. The school also wanted better accessibility features for disabled students, improved mobile device support, and a platform that could scale to meet the needs of more online students.

"We needed a synchronous online meeting tool to support both active learning and small-group work," says Mark Felix, Director of Instructional Support, University of Arizona. "We also wanted a virtual classroom that could be customized. Adobe Connect offered these capabilities and more."

Creatively teaching with technology

The Office of Instruction and Assessment (OIA) at the UA is responsible for a variety of learning technologies, including video streaming, plagiarism prevention solutions, and student response tools, such as clicker devices or apps for answering instructors' questions in class. The OIA works with instructors as well as other campus organizations, such as the Office for Digital Learning (ODL), to explore and apply learning-centered teaching practices, and select appropriate technologies that enhance instructional processes.

"We use Adobe Connect to help instructors be even more creative about teaching and achieving learning objectives," Felix says. "Our goal is to provide effective learning environments for students—in the classroom and online."

About 15% of the university's course catalog is fully online. Faculty members choose how they want to deliver courses, such as live online or recorded lectures with live interactive sessions.

Additionally, the UA strives to meet the needs of people who are visually impaired, have difficulty hearing, or have reduced mobility. Accessibility is gaining increasing regulatory and legislative importance and the UA is working hard to extend these capabilities to the growing number of mobile devices used by learners.
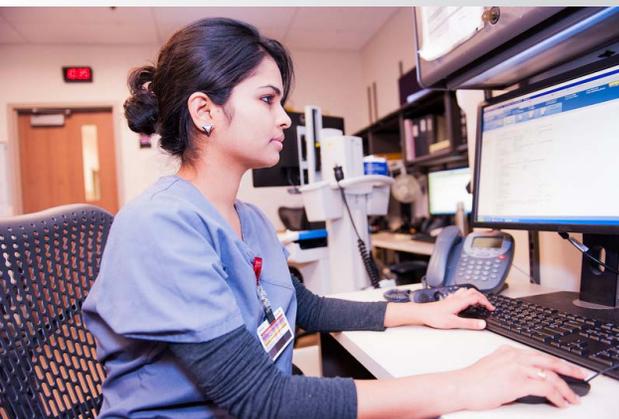
"Adobe Connect and our LTI solution for all the major education LMSs allows us to create deep integration between both systems. We have the privilege to help a school like the University of Arizona to streamline Adobe Connect with their LMS so that they have a complete roundtrip solution for many years to come."

Mike Kollen, President, eSyncTraining

Integrations enhance learning

Among the web conferencing solutions considered, Adobe Connect best met the UA's complex requirements. For instance, Adobe Connect allows meeting hosts and participants to engage in virtual classrooms while on the move by using their iOS or Android devices.

It also meets the university's accessibility requirements better than other solutions with built-in features, such as captioning, menu navigation, keyboard shortcuts, and tab navigation, as well as third-party app interoperability.

In order to be fully integrated with its D2L Brightspace and Blackboard LMS and campus single sign on, and have all support staff trained within a month of selecting Adobe Connect, the UA approached Adobe partner eSyncTraining to help unite Adobe Connect with Brightspace using eSyncTraining Learning Tools Integration (LTI) support.

"eSyncTraining's LTI integration lets teachers and administrators create and edit Adobe Connect Virtual Classroom sessions from within the LMS, and allows teachers and students to join the room directly through the synchronization of their LMS class roster," says Mike Kollen, President, eSyncTraining. "Adobe Connect and our LTI solution for all the major education LMSs allows us to create deep integration between both systems. We have the privilege to help a school like the University of Arizona to streamline Adobe Connect with their LMS so that they have a complete roundtrip solution for many years to come."

LTI is an industry standard created by the IMS Global Learning Consortium for learning systems interoperability. Adobe Connect has an application program interface (API) that supports integration with third-party technologies and the UA purchased several eSyncTraining services, including single sign-on and closed captioning.

"The ability to handle closed captioning really set Adobe Connect apart from the competition," Felix says. "It was surprising to see other companies had not fully solved the issue or didn't offer real-time captioning."

In addition, breakout rooms in Adobe Connect were an important feature for the UA. It allows instructors to break large groups into smaller groups of attendees who can speak to each other, use the Chat pod, collaborate on a whiteboard, and share their screens, all while the instructor can assist and answer questions.

Making a difference in and out of the classroom

The UA acquired 500 Adobe Connect Concurrent User licenses along with two Seminar Rooms for larger courses and events. Adobe Connect is available to all students by logging in to Brightspace. With eSyncTraining apps, they can build online meetings, create their own study groups, and meet virtually with other students using Adobe Connect without needing faculty to take any action. Within the first 15 months, more than 30,000 users logged on and more than 3,000 hosts built more than 6,000 meeting rooms..

SOLUTION AT A GLANCE

· Adobe Connect

"The Concurrent User license model in Adobe Connect works really well for the University of Arizona because it allows us to concentrate on supporting faculty," Felix says. "With Named Host licenses, we'd have to spend more time managing user requests instead of making a difference in student-faculty interactions. And it's much more affordable when done on scale."

The UA also uses Adobe Connect for administrative meetings, community outreach, and research. Classified as a Research 1 university by Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, the University of Arizona uses Adobe Connect so researchers can easily communicate and collaborate from multiple locations.

"Adobe Connect is an important addition to our suite of digital teaching and learning tools at the University of Arizona," Felix says.

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