

Connectivity drives programming at Laurus College with remote learning

Fiber circuits create educational opportunities for all kinds of students

Laurus College has been providing higher education since 2006 to high school graduates as well as many non-traditional students seeking to restart their educational and career paths. These students include many veterans and active-duty military personnel who are eligible for academic assistance. Offering highly concentrated classes in expanding fields like business technology, web design, computer animation and audio/visual production, Laurus College's enrollment has grown to over 700 students.

For the last ten years, that growth has been fueled by a technology partnership with Spectrum Business, which offers scalable solutions and engineering expertise. Laurus College's mission is to offer "the flexibility to control your education with real-time classes and live, online instruction." Fulfilling that plan has been at the heart of the Spectrum Business partnership.

"We were founded as a brick-and-mortar campus, but as times have progressed, we have started moving more and more online," says Nat Keebler, Assistant Director of Infrastructure and Technology, Laurus College. "That has just exploded to the point where the large majority of our student base is online."

Connectivity is critical to giving distance learners the flexibility they need to further their education while simultaneously managing the demands of a full-time job, raising a family and other life situations. To ensure their staff is equipped to manage student needs and administrative responsibilities, Laurus College leveraged their fiber investment with the installation of an intuitive and immediately popular voice service, Unified Communications with RingCentral.

Six campuses, one source

Laurus College operates in five California locations: Atascadero, Chula Vista, Oxnard, Santa Maria and San Luis Obispo; as well as Las Vegas, Nevada. Each location hosts classes, tutoring sessions, training courses and other services designed to facilitate non-traditional learning.

"A lot of our students work full-time or already have children, so they don't have the time to commit to attend multiple courses at various times throughout the week," Keebler notes. "They are looking for flexibility to help them get into a career. At Laurus College, students only take one course per five-week term during a time that is convenient for them."



Laurus College attracts non-traditional learners with highly focused, remotely accessible courses which leverage Dedicated Fiber Internet (DFI) from Spectrum Business. Above, the administration building at their Santa Maria, California campus.

Client profile



Company

Laurus College

Industry

Higher Education

Services

Dedicated Fiber Internet (DFI)
Ethernet Services
Unified Communications with RingCentral

Overview

- To better accommodate the growing needs of non-traditional students they serve, Laurus College expanded its associate and bachelor's degree programming around remote learning.
- The college simultaneously needed to improve communications for educators and staff at each of its six campus locations spread out across southern California and Nevada.

Outcomes

- To give Laurus College students dependable access to hundreds of courses from home, Spectrum Business installed a Dedicated Fiber Internet (DFI) circuit at their main network hub.
- The internet connection feeds locations in California and Nevada via individual Ethernet circuits. These circuits keep individual college locations connected to one another, which in turn gives remote and on-campus students access to both live and recorded courses.
- To keep college staff better connected despite their geographic separation, Unified Communications with RingCentral was introduced. It won immediate plaudits for its ease of use and array of time-saving features.

Why it matters

- With an IT staff of just five, including two student help desk volunteers, Laurus College has been able to build out its remote learning programming through this advanced connectivity.
- A technology partnership with Spectrum Business gives Laurus College leaders greater peace of mind knowing their continued expansion is fully supported.



The introduction of Unified Communication with RingCentral has made it easier for faculty and staff to stay connected to work even when relaxing outdoors. "The messenger system is phenomenal," assistant IT director Nat Keebler says. "Wherever you are, you can be connected."

Laurus College hosts remote classes across the region they serve via fiber technology that allows students to join from anywhere. A [Dedicated Fiber Internet \(DFI\)](#) circuit at their San Luis Obispo location gives the school its critical channel to the internet; connectivity is carried forward from there to the other locations with individual [Ethernet](#) circuits.

For Keebler, reliability is paramount: "Having the speed and low latency is great, but just keeping everything up and running is most critical to us. Spectrum Business has been so reliable, and very responsive to us if something ever does come up. The biggest thing for us right now is that downtime is almost non-existent."

Voice service that makes everyone happy

In the past, Laurus College administrators struggled with voice service that was set up and controlled by an outside provider. Whenever new call groups or lines needed to be set up, a ticket had to be put in. Message systems sometimes failed or communications were lost when individual computers went down.

Laurus College IT leaders opted to make a fresh start when Spectrum Business account executive Glenn Shackelford proposed a new cloud-based solution that would make it easier to take business calls from anywhere, receive text messages for important calls and give the college direct control of their voice service.

"They chose [Unified Communications with RingCentral](#) because of our relationship and their ease in working with us, not to mention our technical knowledge," Shackelford explains.

"Spectrum Business has been the driving force, the backbone of what we do."

- Nat Keebler, Assistant Director of Infrastructure and Technology, Laurus College

The installation process went smoothly. Employees were immediately attracted to the system's intuitive design and feature-rich setup, and began transitioning to Unified Communications with RingCentral well before the new service was formally introduced.



At Chula Vista and five other Laurus College campuses in California and Nevada, Ethernet circuits from Spectrum Business keep students connected, whether they are in a classroom or at home.

“I talked to my IT director a couple of weeks after, and he said ‘I have never before in my life done a project that not one person complained about,’” Keebler laughs. “Everyone is ecstatic with it, whether it’s someone like me not having to give out my personal phone number to people who need service help after hours, or just the ability to instant message with GIFs and emojis.”

“Customer service is huge for us. Spectrum Business is extremely, extremely easy for us to get hold of. Anytime we’ve needed help of any kind, whether on the IT or business side, someone has an answer for us.”

– Nat Keebler, Assistant Director of Infrastructure and Technology, Laurus College

Connectivity is often better than at home

Laurus College campuses not only offer online endpoints for remote student learners. Sometimes they are destinations in themselves for students seeking places to work and study.

“Some of our students are in situations where they don’t even have internet at home, or if they do, they will burn through their data plan in no time taking one of our classes,” Keebler says. “They go to campus so they don’t have to worry about that limitation.”

Most campus student activity is centered at their Chula Vista location, which has many military veterans and active service personnel. While there are incentives for in-person learning (for example, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs pays a higher monthly housing allowance for in-person learners), the connectivity attracts others, too.

“The Chula Vista campus is really becoming a hub for us, creating more of a community learning environment,” Keebler notes. “A lot of students bring their laptops to the campus because the connection they get is so much faster than whatever they have at home.” These laptops are supplied by the college, along with learning software and access to online library resources and the My Laurus Portal application.

Service that never quits

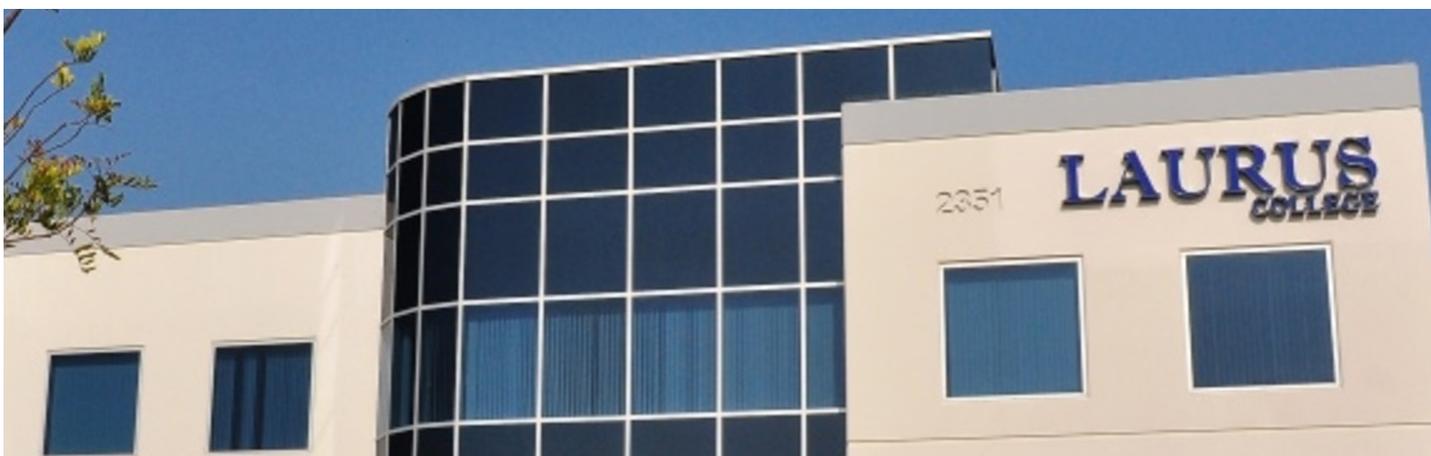
Because the students they serve need to access Laurus College at any time of day or night to attend both online and recorded classes, connectivity must always be on. With Spectrum Business, this is never in question.

“Having that constant reassurance our internet is working is so important,” Keebler says. “If something ever goes down, which is rare, we get a call from service support it’s being worked on before a problem has been reported. Transparency is so important, as well as the fact Spectrum Business is so great about helping us get back up.”

That support goes further, Keebler adds. One time he recalled having trouble with an unresponsive service provider. Needing to get the service restored quickly, he reached out to Spectrum Business Sales Engineer Lazaro Granados, hoping he could

“Whether it is working with IT issues or dealing with a sudden crunch that needs a quick resolution, Spectrum Business goes above and beyond to help us.”

– Nat Keebler, Assistant Director of Infrastructure and Technology, Laurus College



At Laurus College, a typical class session lasts two and a half hours, a big commitment for students who work full time or raise families. Offering them the flexibility to take classes from home is how the college leverages connectivity from Spectrum Business.

offer some outside expertise. Granados was able to help Keebler fix the problem by talking him through how to trace it to its source.

The IT team at Laurus College is small, but likes to be hands-on when it comes to their technology infrastructure. With Spectrum Business, they have a partner dedicated to making their service experience as seamless as possible, whoever is at the controls.

“Having service that is up all the time means we don’t get pulled away from complex tasks we have set for ourselves to troubleshoot service issues,” Keebler says. “Anytime we do run into a roadblock, I have been able to reach out to Spectrum Business technicians, who are great at giving advice. I’ve actually learned a lot about my own profession from dealing with Spectrum Business over the years.”

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