



Cisco Partners **Collaborate** to Help **Change Educational Paradigm** for California’s Neediest Students

The rural towns of Lemoore and Coalinga lie nestled in the heart of central California’s San Joaquin Valley. With agriculture as the central valley’s major business, Coalinga and Lemoore residents face challenges with immigration issues, lack of transportation, limited resources and seasonal unemployment that can reach 40 to 60 percent.

West Hills College, the area’s local community college, is working to help students overcome these challenges while at the same time providing top-quality education. Together with Cisco Systems and Cisco partners AMS.NET and VOICEPRO, West Hills College finds it is changing the paradigm of how higher education is delivered to residents in San Joaquin Valley.

Reliability Problems in Rural Area Prompts New Solution

West Hills College is the fastest-growing community college in California. Its faculty and staff of 300 serve more than 5,000 students at its Coalinga, Firebaugh and Lemoore campuses. The District’s unreliable infrastructure consisted of separate data, voice and video systems each running on antiquated hardware. Each system had its own infrastructure, its own wide area network (WAN) connections and its own set of challenges. Often one or more WAN connections were experiencing outages. A state grant provided the perfect opportunity to invest in the school’s infrastructure and accommodate future growth. The college needed a network that was reliable and scalable, providing a long-term life expectancy and positive return on investment.

“We want to extend educational access to people and our network wouldn’t allow that,” said Dr. Frank Gornick, Chancellor of West Hills Community College District. “The Cisco AVVID architecture with converged voice, video and data system solves the problem, keeps us ahead of the technology curve and allows us to expand our educational programs.”





Cisco and Partners Provide Reliable, Unified Solutions

The West Hills staff considered other solutions, but only Cisco offered integrated voice, video, data and unified messaging from a single manufacturer that could be easily administered from a single point. Other solutions considered did not offer the complete end-to-end integration that West Hills was looking for. Only Cisco had the breadth and depth of understanding and corresponding solution set to meet all the needs.

West Hills' decision to go with Cisco AVVID architecture created a unique collaboration effort among the college, Cisco, two Cisco partners and California State University, Fresno.

“We wanted to create strategic partnerships to take every advantage of implementing this powerful new network,” said Susan Kincade, dean of learning resources at West Hills. “We wanted to make business decisions that could ‘piggy-back’ with what Cisco could offer.” For instance, the college offered to beta test new products for Cisco so it was exposed to the most advanced technology, and leveraged that partnership to get a very competitive USDA grant for multiple video-conferencing classrooms connecting three sites in West Hills District as well as nearby Fresno State.

“The system we had was inoperable and the company that made it was going out of business,” said Dr. Gornick. “We didn’t want to get into the same predicament with the new hardware. We wanted a company that had an all-in-one solution and the vision to meet our future needs. We wanted partners that had visions as big and as bold as the ones we had!” Cisco recommended key partners to complete the strategic partnership picture: communications technology integrator VOICEPRO, and network integrator AMS.NET. AMS.NET and VOICEPRO had worked together on similar successful projects, so the firms had a good working relationship and confidence in another successful deployment for West Hills.

Cisco, AMS.NET and VOICEPRO specialists worked with West Hills to design the voice, video and data infrastructure. AMS.NET is a Silver Certified Cisco Partner holding a specialization in IP telephony, wireless LAN, security and voice access. VOICEPRO, as a Cisco Premier Certified Partner also with IP telephony specialization, took on the role of reviewing the existing phone system and helping the college improve its communication and messaging.

“Our goal was to provide reliability, redundancy and bandwidth to run new applications,” said Robert Tocci, president of AMS.NET. The team went to work installing a new, switched network with a gigabit backbone for a high performance infrastructure. By combining all three individual legacy systems and WAN circuits into one common network, the resulting design provided West Hills with the high reliability it lacked with its old individual systems. Security features provided network protection from Internet and outside attacks.

“Cisco excels in providing this functionality, enabling us to keep everything on one network, yet with protection and separation from each application,” said Tocci.

VOICEPRO’s mission was to phase out the old legacy phone system and deploy a new integrated phone system platform. Cisco AVVID would allow West Hills to manage voice, video, data and messaging on a single network, while positioning the college for growth and new application deployment.

“On the messaging side, they were using automated attendant and voicemail,” said Annette McCormick, senior account manager for VOICEPRO. “What Cisco Unity brings to the picture is integrated voicemail, email and fax that can be managed from a single point. This was a tremendous advantage for the staff. A traditional PBX system can only address some of the voice needs of an organization like West Hills. With an integrated environment, you can deliver the applications needed today, and have the open platform to add applications down the road.”



The **results** make every issue and challenge worth it.
We have a system in place that **meets our needs**
and our students' needs today, and will continue
to meet them **well into the future."**

Three Partners Work Closely to Overcome Challenges and Position College for Future Growth

As with any major deployment, unanticipated challenges and issues arose, but were easily managed through by the expertise of Cisco TAC and the services of AMS.NET and VOICEPRO.

"We reminded ourselves that we agreed to be on the leading edge," said Kincade. "There were little details along the learning curve, but the results make every issue and challenge worth it. We have a system in place that meets our needs and our students' needs today, and will continue to meet them well into the future."

Video meetings had an immediate affect on staff resources. Rather than driving an hour to attend a meeting at a college location, everyone now utilizes the video system. Gornick reports that the staff is becoming very astute at using the new equipment, and the school was cited in an accreditation visit on the skillful use of technology to increase productivity.

New Cisco Network Will Pay Dividends in the Future

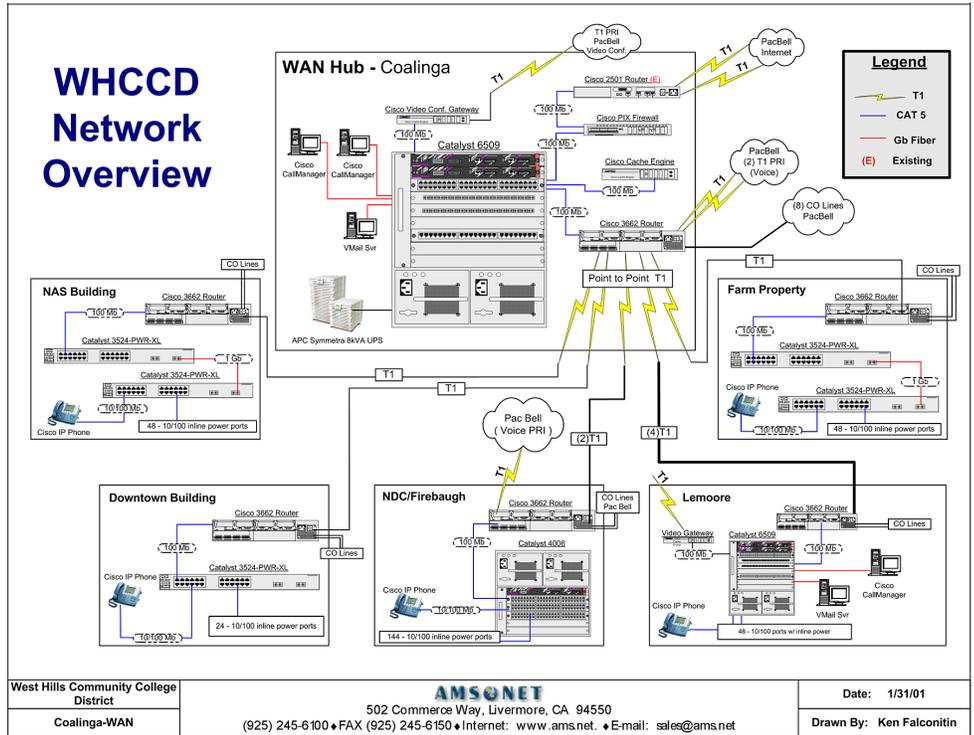
"West Hill Community College students are among the most economically disadvantaged in the state," said Barbara Hioco, president of the Lemoore campus. "It's our job to provide them with the greatest education we have without letting transportation, lack of money or other issues get in the way."

The new system offers a feature-rich, streamlined network, while providing a competitive advantage. Thanks to its online learning capability powered by an AVVID infrastructure, the best instructor can teach a course no matter where that teacher is located. The college can offer a course in one location and extend it to other locations as needed. As an example, instead of holding several calculus classes in different geographical locations, each with a handful of students, the college needs just one teacher and with the AVVID infrastructure that class is taught to two or three classes simultaneously.

"This year we have about 1,000 students enrolled in our online campus," said Dr. Gornick. "That's 100 percent growth in three years! The new system allows us to use resources effectively and offer a very low-cost, high quality education." The Cisco solution enables West Hills' students to work around their everyday challenges and get the education they're looking for.

"We're a small, rural community college serving an economically poor area," said Hioco. "Our success proves that you don't have to be a large, urban, resource-rich area to provide leading-edge levels of service. The Cisco tools deployed by AMS.NET and VOICEPRO give us the ability to do anything we want to do, go anywhere we want to go at any time, and that's a huge advantage for where we are located."

WHCCD Network Overview



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