

Executive Summary

Customer

Bay Area Community College Consortium (BACCC)

Challenge

Overcoming the funding challenges faced by community colleges to deliver hands-on ICT training in the latest technologies to students across the Bay Area.

Objectives

- Dramatically reduce the cost of building and managing ICT lab facilities by creating a state-of-the-art, centralized ICT lab to serve all Bay Area Community Colleges
- Deliver hands-on technical training in the latest technologies to ensure that students have the in-demand skills and experience demanded by employers
- Encourage regional collaboration between community colleges to achieve economies of scale and provide a greater range of curriculum to students

Technology Solution

A centralized NETLAB+ data center with purchased and donated equipment capable of supporting at least 288 simultaneous users and 16,000 three-hour lab sessions per week

Results

The regional ICT lab saved its member colleges millions of dollars. The BACCC estimates that it would have collectively cost \$3.6M for each of its 24 participating colleges to build a similar lab. The regional ICT lab was built for less than a third of the one-time cost, and it enables a higher level of technical management and support for all at a much lower operating cost.

Bay Area Community Colleges Save Millions with Regional ICT Lab

In 2015, community colleges across the San Francisco Bay Area recognized that they all faced a similar challenge: delivering hands-on ICT training to students in the latest technologies in spite of pervasive funding challenges. Together, they formed the Bay Area Community College Consortium (BACCC) and obtained a grant from the State of California to build a state-of-the-art, centralized ICT training lab capable of serving all of their students using NDG's NETLAB+ platform. The BACCC estimates that this approach saved millions of dollars while vastly increasing the number and range of ICT labs they can offer.

The Challenge

The Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) industry is booming in the San Francisco Bay Area, and businesses there constantly struggle to find candidates with hands-on experience using the latest in-demand technologies. To overcome this skills gap, companies are increasingly directing their recruitment efforts beyond four-year universities to community colleges, where students get the chance to develop practical, real-world skills through hands-on ICT training labs.

Yet, community college ICT programs are pervasively underfunded, and they often find it challenging to build and manage hands-on ICT lab facilities in the face of budget constraints. Equipment, software, and services are expensive and have relatively short useful lives given the rapid pace of innovation. This can make it difficult for programs to offer relevant training in the latest high-demand technologies.

This is precisely the challenge that the 28 community colleges in the San Francisco Bay Area faced. However, they realized that although they individually lacked funding for their ICT lab facilities, collectively they would be able to fund a centralized, state-of-the-art technical lab facility that would meet all of their needs.

The Solution

In 2015, the community colleges joined forces to create the Bay Area Community College Consortium (BACCC) and apply for a State of California 40% CTE Enhancement Funding grant to transfer all of their ICT lab equipment into a centralized data center at Cabrillo College. The BACCC now uses the NETLAB+ platform from Network Development Group (NDG) to enable remote access to the ICT training lab.

NDG's NETLAB+ is a remote access solution that allows academic institutions to host real IT equipment, virtual machines, and a wide variety of curriculum content options. NETLAB+ includes all the software needed to provide an environment through which instructors can manage IT courses, and students can schedule and complete lab exercises. NETLAB+ includes supported content specifically designed for popular IT academies, including Cisco, VMware, EMC, Palo Alto Networks, Red Hat, and more.

"It was a no-brainer to use NETLAB+," explained Richard Grotegut, ICT Deputy Sector Navigator at BACCC. "As an instructor, preparing a lab activity, creating it, delivering it, and maintaining it is a lot of work. NETLAB+ gives us thousands of labs that have already been produced and are available for instructors to use. So having something readily available that teaches the desired outcomes is like a teacher's best friend. That's one of the great advantages of NETLAB+."

Results

BACCC estimates that it would have cost an individual college \$150,000 to create an ICT training lab to support its needs, and that does not include the considerable costs it takes to manage and maintain the system. If each of the 24 participating colleges had done that, they would have collectively spent \$3.6M. By using NDG's NETLAB+ platform to create a centralized ICT lab, BACCC was able to deliver the same functionality for less than a third of the one-time cost. Additionally, it is able to provide a higher level of technical management and support at a much lower expense.

Cost savings are just one of the many benefits of the system. NETLAB+ comes with over 500 proven ICT labs developed in partnership with leading vendors and aligned to industry certifications. Now BACCC colleges are able to offer a wider range of curriculum covering today's most in-demand technologies, and they're able to deploy them faster than ever. Additionally, this new collaborative approach to ICT training provides new opportunities to coordinate curriculum across colleges to collectively meet regional needs, rather than having each college trying to cover everything on its own.

NETLAB+ has enabled BACCC to remove many traditional access barriers. The new lab facility can now be used to remotely train instructors in ICT technologies, greatly reducing faculty development costs and helping them bring new curriculum to their students. And now community college students, who often have to juggle job and family responsibilities, are able to access labs from anywhere with an internet connection. So, they're better able to fit these career- and life-changing programs into their busy lives.

Talk to Us About Your Program Requirements

Learn how NETLAB+ can help you deliver the training your students need to launch new IT careers. Contact us to schedule a free consultation:

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