Cambium Networks™

Corpus Christi College Builds Digital Learning Environment With Xirrus Wi-Fi

Overview

LOCATED IN PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA, Corpus Christi College is a private Catholic coeducational school for students in years 7 through 12. More than 1,200 students attend, served by more than 100 teachers and 50 staff. The college earned the prestigious Apple Distinguished School status for the third time in the 2016-2017 school year. Apple awards the status to schools demonstrating innovation, leadership and educational excellence.

Rich Technology Helps to Attract Top Students

CORPUS CHRISTI ENJOYS A REPUTATION for strong academic performance, with 85% of graduates pursuing higher education. "We compete for top students with several other nearby schools," says Trevor Galbraith, Director of Learning Technologies. "We set ourselves apart by being a technology-rich school with a 21st-century digital learning environment." Students in years 8 through 9 are required to bring MacBooks to school; students in years 10 through 12 bring iPads.

The college's previous Wi-Fi network buckled under the demands of 1:1 computing, frequently slowing down or failing entirely. The tipping point came when a Wi-Fi issue forced the college to reschedule government-mandated Progressive Achievement Tests, upending the school day for more than 200 students and their teachers. This galvanized the IT department to replace its Wi-Fi network. "We needed Wi-Fi that just worked," says Dave Moyle, IT Technical Administrator. "We couldn't afford to get it wrong because we wouldn't receive funding for a do-over."

Fast, Reliable and Software-Upgradeable

CORPUS CHRISTI INVITED FOUR LEADING WI-FI VENDORS to set up a proof of concept in a school building. The winner: a Xirrus Wi-Fi solution proposed by Catalytic IT. Moyle says, "When students start buying faster 802.11ac Wave 2 devices, our new access points will not require an upgrade. We can add support for Wave 2 with just a few mouse clicks." The IT team also appreciated the simplicity of Xirrus Wi-Fi: Xirrus access points (AP) don't require a controller. Additionally, each AP can contain up to eight radios, reducing the number of APs to purchase, install, cable and manage.
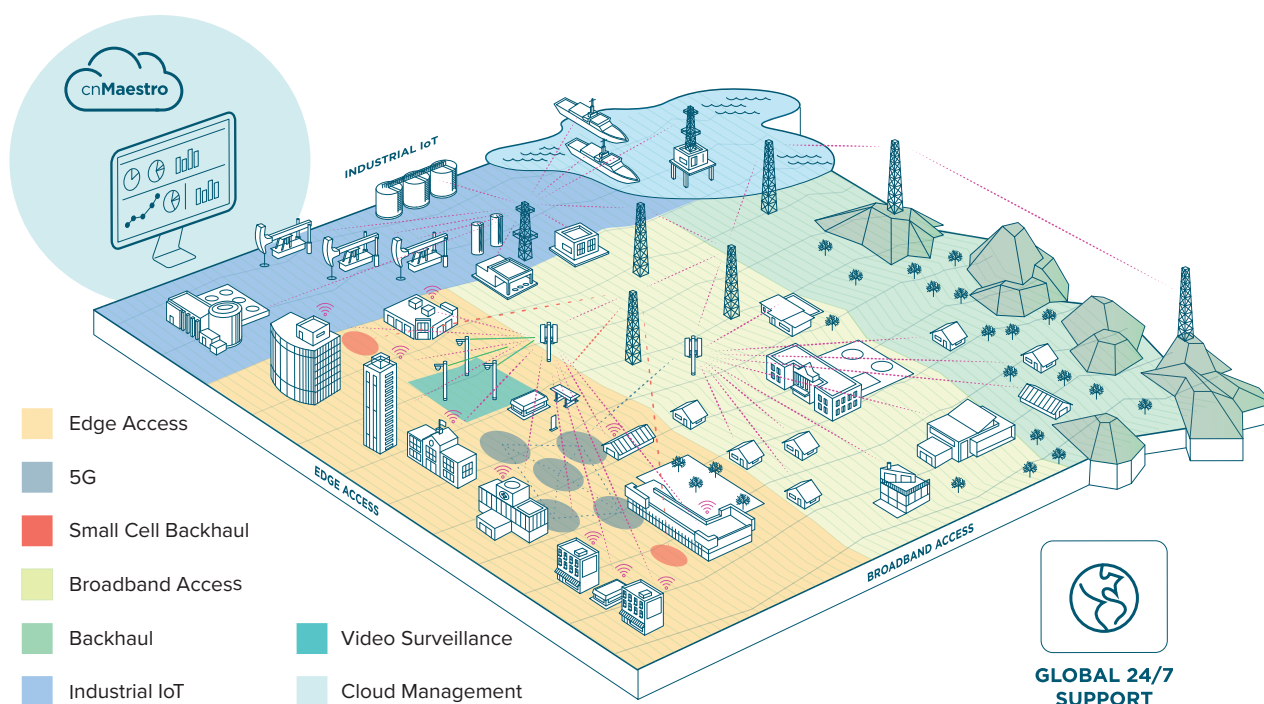
Solid Network for Online Learning and Testing

THE XIRRUS WI-FI NETWORK FORMS THE FOUNDATION for Corpus Christi's digital learning environment. Now students read and annotate digital iBooks rather than paper textbooks. Teachers use iTunes U for content distribution, collecting assignments and private discussions. Some teachers have adopted the "flipped" classroom, assigning students to watch video lectures from iTunes U before class. Class time is reserved for discussion, interactive online exercises and online quizzes to assess students' understanding of the subject matter.

It's not unusual to see one student connecting with several devices at once — for example, conducting web research on an iPad, taking notes on a MacBook and collaborating with classmates on a smartphone. "As students mature, they discover how they like to learn," Galbraith says. "With our Xirrus Wi-Fi network they can connect with any device and access whatever content helps them learn."

Galbraith emphasizes that digital learning goes far beyond hardware, software and the number of computers or iPads in classrooms. "When we talk about digital education at Corpus, the discussion encompasses the mindsets, policies, users, trends and infrastructure that support a dynamic and ever-evolving learning ecosystem," he says. "Our Xirrus Wi-Fi ensures that learning is a personal experience for every student at Corpus Christi College."

Cambium Networks' Gigabit wireless solutions enable municipal, enterprise and service provider operators to tailor connectivity to meet exact requirements and grow as needs evolve.

Reliable Wi-Fi That Teachers and Students Can Count On

TEACHERS NO LONGER NEED TO ALTER their lesson plans at the last minute because of network issues. "Teachers, students and staff know they can depend on Xirrus Wi-Fi in the classroom," Moyle says. "It just works." On most days, the Xirrus Wi-Fi network connects more than 1,800 devices — sometimes more than 2,000. All students in a cohort can now take the Progressive Achievement Test at the same time.

An Ongoing Partnership

GALBRAITH CONCLUDES, "Many technology vendors consider their job done once they provide a solution... Students think the network was built just for them. Xirrus Wi-Fi is one of the most satisfying IT projects I've undertaken in more than 20 years with Corpus Christi."