

Transforming Your Campus to Support BYOD Collaboration

By Jami Milner



Learning in the digital age has become more mobile, social and technologically rich. Many professors are spending less time lecturing and more time assigning collaborative group projects that rely on IT tools as connection points for students. This shift has big implications for classroom design. Higher education institutions are creating active learning classrooms with movable furniture and adaptable workspaces. Interactive touchscreens, large displays and digital tools that allow interoperability between various devices are becoming common sights in university classrooms, lecture halls and libraries.

Immersed in daily use of technology, today's typical student brings a smartphone, tablet or laptop into the classroom – along with high expectations that they'll have access to tools that will help them learn, share and communicate their work in real-time.

To keep pace with this emerging landscape, higher education technology leaders should consider the best cost-effective ways to embrace bring your own device (BYOD) collaboration on their campuses. How could prioritizing digital collaboration transform traditional study rooms, classrooms and lecture halls?

Huddle Spaces

Already embraced by businesses, huddle spaces are making their way onto campuses. The idea is to create a small space where students (or faculty) can meet face-to-face and work together on a project with access to digital collaboration tools. Typically, a huddle room features a large display that's easy to connect to using a range of devices and platforms. The goal is to create an environment where participants can easily share and edit documents, presentations, images and more.

When choosing technology for a huddle space, look for equipment that can integrate with collaboration software products – especially those that are platform agnostic, because that makes it easy for students to connect their own devices. Depending on room size and intended use, consider whether it makes more sense to install a horizontal (tabletop) touchscreen or a traditional wall-mounted display.

Next Generation Classrooms

The traditional college classroom includes a podium, whiteboard and several rows of desks facing the front of the room. Some universities are starting to reject the traditional layout in favor of what's being called the next generation classroom.

In such learning spaces, enabling digital collaboration becomes a priority. For example, a next generation classroom might have a large monitor at the front. Rather than individual student desks, there might be six different stations, each with its own interactive touchscreen monitor. The instructor still teaches from the front of the classroom but is able to push digital content from the main screen onto the smaller screens, and students are able to instantly share their work with the rest of the class by moving it to the larger display.

Ambient light reflecting (ALR) technology means the classroom doesn't need to be dark in order to clearly see the screens – it can be an open, bright environment, with technology that's intuitive and easy to use.

Auditoriums

University lecture classes have traditionally been the most difficult courses in which to foster interaction between students and faculty. With one professor at the front and several hundred students in the auditorium, how can the discourse be anything but one-sided?



Yet today's technological advances are enabling students to interact with each other and their instructors digitally. Equipped with a large interactive display, an instructor can use polling software to generate real-time responses from students. With newer app-based polling solutions, students can use their own devices, instead of clickers, to submit responses. Most polling software allows for both multiple choice and open-ended text entry questions, and instructors can display instant results, including statistics or word webs.

Other lecture hall instructors use a concept called back channeling, which allows students to submit typed questions, answers and comments in an ongoing "chat" that is visible on the instructor's device and can also be projected to the main display. This type of interactivity helps professors gauge students' comprehension of material and address their questions.

Increasing the amount – and quality – of communication between instructors and students is the goal of BYOD collaboration. Ultimately, better communication means more targeted teaching and a higher quality education experience. Today's students have grown up in a digital world and are more likely to choose IT rich institutions that recognize the value of collaborative technology. In the quest to future-proof a college campus, BYOD collaboration is an essential piece of the puzzle.

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