

Video Conferencing Helps Higher Ed Reclaim Tutoring



By EVAN WADE - Contributor

Consider three seemingly unrelated facts:



Video conferencing can revolutionize colleges' and universities' approach to tutoring.

1. College students are busy.
2. Higher learning institutions operate in a ruthlessly competitive market.
3. Communication technology is better, more flexible, and easier to integrate than ever.

Together, these facts reveal that the higher learning industry is primed to capitalize on video conferencing by using the technology to regain a foothold in the tutoring industry.

It's already well known that web conferencing enhances many existing higher-ed processes. Web conferencing expands reach and saves money on recruitment efforts. It facilitates face-to-face contact with parents, which is especially necessary as they participate more in the student journey. And, of course, it frequently supports and improves academics.

Tutoring is yet another area of higher learning where web conferencing technology can add value. First, with web conferencing, appointments can occur outside students' regular on-campus schedules. Second, institutions that integrate tutoring into their larger cloud strategy can entice potential students and current enrollees away from third-party tutoring services and other paid help that might cross ethical boundaries. Here's a closer look at how this works.

The IT Pro's Guide to Video Conferencing

The IT Pro's Guide to Video Conferencing

Here are the key drivers for why customers are adopting video conferencing, how to improve adoption and utilization, features of certain video conferencing applications, and more!

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Reclaiming the Market With Video Conferencing

Tutoring is a sizable industry, and according to Technavio, online tutoring is expected to generate over \$38 billion by 2021. College students have predictably taken advantage of the online tutoring trend, both as customers and by becoming tutors themselves, because it enables them to easily connect with their tutoring counterpart via a video platform.

To many students who grew up with consumer video tools on their laptops and smartphones, meeting someone for the first time via video chat feels natural and puts them at ease for a potential in-person meeting. Moreover, modern web conferencing solutions offer features that match or exceed those of business communication systems. Students can share documents, write on a shared whiteboard, and do effectively everything else they could do in a standard tutoring session.

An institutionally supported video tutoring platform can help colleges and universities reclaim their rightful place in the tutoring industry. Take these three high-level examples:

- **Paid systems** turn the benefits of video conferencing into a larger value proposition for universities, offer students tutoring with institutional backing, and give work-study tutors extra opportunity to earn hours.
- **Unpaid one-to-one systems** serve as a "meeting ground" for students and tutors who may or may not be hired through the institution. While not likely a huge revenue generator, this is definitely a *value* generator, considering the low cost and ease of deploying a web conferencing or video conferencing tool (more on that below).
- **Expanded "learning help" systems** make the current classroom- or lab-based "open help" approach more accessible. At minimum, this expands options for students who, again, increasingly prefer the screen over in-person meetings with strangers.

Altogether, this solution helps institutions cheaply and efficiently fulfill students' needs and improve tutoring techniques so that students aren't tempted to look elsewhere.

Higher-Ed Technology Made Easy

In the past, merely putting a video on the internet was hard. Indeed, not that long ago, YouTube was considered revolutionary just because it simplified video uploading.

Today, things are better. Now there are tools that do the hard stuff on the back end and let institutions embed front-end communication into apps. For universities wanting to offer online tutoring, this technology is a game changer. The same goes for schools that want to give students with existing tutor relationships a neutral, institution-controlled meeting place. And that's before considering all the other use cases, from the recruiting side to classroom innovation and more.

The best tools on this front are built for flexibility, using standards like WebRTC to ensure that the most popular devices, browsers, etc. are supported with minimal hassle. Along with virtual whiteboard capability and real-time document sharing, they add multi-environment support. In other words, the API enables student and tutor to attend the same session while each using a different type of device, such as a laptop and a smartphone. The ability to bypass development, testing, rollout, and every other phase of a dedicated video-based conferencing solution is a major boon. A third party that handles infrastructural requirements and ensures performance is equally useful.

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These ideas might have been impossible to achieve individually in the past; combined, they certainly would have been. Colleges and universities now have the perfect foundation to generate more revenue while creating new work and learning opportunities for students — and returning to prominence in the tutoring industry.