

# Central Piedmont Community College Case Study

From Pilot to Present:

Video is an integral part of the teaching and learning experience across eight campuses

In 2009, Central Piedmont Community College signed with Panopto as a pilot project. Twelve years later, the partnership has blossomed into an essential part of the learning experience for both professors and students. The community college leads as a frontrunner in technology-forward higher education, showcasing the creativity of administrators and instructors with an extensive list of use cases.

When initially rolled out, the Information Technology Services (ITS) team had to reassure professors that Panopto wasn't going to replace them and that if material was provided through video, students would still attend classes. But it didn't take long for instructors to see the power of video and start incorporating it into their courses for everything from lecture capture and skills-based learning to student evaluations and video assignments.

The story of Central Piedmont Community College exemplifies what can happen when the right video platform is put in place, made available and widely used.

The challenge:

Seeking standardization and supportability while overcoming user reluctance and cost concerns

Central Piedmont's initial need involved two driving factors: standardization and supportability. The ITS team was looking for a single platform that could standardize the community college's video content. Standardization would make video recording, sharing and viewing easier for instructors and students. It would also make it



## About Central Piedmont Community College

Since its founding in 1963, Central Piedmont Community College has evolved into a multi-campus college where students receive a combination of technical and soft skills training from quality faculty who prepare them to enter the workforce and make a difference in their family, business, community, and the world.

With eight locations throughout Mecklenburg County in Charlotte, North Carolina, nearly 300 for-credit programs of study and more than 55 professional pathways, Central Piedmont provides students with a real-world, affordable, hands-on education that will change their lives and impact their community.

manageable for the ITS team to provide support across the entire college.

“We support all of our instructional divisions from welding to nursing to surgical tech to truck driver training,” said Kris Motto, Director of Instructional Technology & Digital Media Services. “Our team of five supports the entire college across eight campuses.”

The team needed to see a return on investment, both financially and academically. “From our perspective, we wanted to use what we had,” said Motto. “We were trying to make the best of our finances and get the most out of what we already had on-site, so Panopto was a good draw, knowing that we could run it on the computers that we already had in every classroom.”

When the ITS team introduced Panopto as a new tool, there was also some initial reluctance from users. While some instructors wanted video recording for lecture capture, others were concerned that introducing video content would mean they’d record lectures once and keep replaying it, making their jobs irrelevant and the student learning experience less dynamic.

The solution:

## Delivering creative use cases, security features, auto-transcription and a scalable network solution

The team decided to give Panopto to a few instructors who wanted to do more online. “I started in 2012 or 2013 by just creating video lectures for my classes. Since then, I have found it can be used in other ways,” said Dr. William G. Kennedy, Associate Professor of Criminal Justice. These key instructors ultimately became advocates, sharing their experience using Panopto with others in their department, which in turn grew the user base and video library organically.

“That initial step allowed us to turn Panopto into more than just a lecture capture platform. It became our media repository at that point,” said Jeff Jarvis, Media Systems Project Manager. “As Panopto rolled out new features, we’ve made sure that our faculty is aware of those features, so the whole program has evolved as Panopto has evolved.”

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— **Jeff Jarvis**, Media Systems Project Manager

“I have been using Panopto since the college first began to pilot the platform as a new learning technology,” said history instructor Dr. Gary Ritter. “The responses from the students were immediate and very positive. Students remarked that seeing the videos of their instructor made their online classes feel more familiar and less like they were by themselves. Panopto has remained an integral part of my classes.”

### Use cases across departments

The community college offers a wide range of academic programs, many of them skills-based. With the support of Motto and Jarvis’s team, the various departments have found unique ways to incorporate video in a relevant, impactful way. “Each time a department has come to us with a need, our first response is always to look to Panopto—how can we leverage that platform and the hardware that we have available in that department to make it easier for them,” said Jarvis.

Panopto’s platform is especially helpful for providing skills-based learning video content in academic programs such as nursing, trucking, automotive and construction. Students can visually see a skill completed and rewind to view it again, take notes and participate in discussions with other students.

Panopto is empowering instructors to get creative with recording, taking GoPro cameras into the construction field or capturing segmented topics in a web design lecture. The communications department has used Panopto for

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recording and evaluating student speeches, while the nursing department uses iPads to record exams to be evaluated by the instructor later.

Departments also use Panopto to create an organized library of video content. The forensics department moved all previously recorded materials from other platforms to Panopto because they see the value in having one platform house all the content it distributes to students, and the library archives supervisor uses Panopto for archiving video content from VHS tapes and DVDs.

“We produced video tutorials and written documentation to get faculty up and running. It was one of the smoothest transitions from in-person learning to 100% online learning,” said Jarvis. “We had really no complaints from any of the users as they first started using the platform.”

**Capacity, scalability and security**

Especially as the college spans multiple campuses, high capacity, scalability, and security are crucial features. Several years ago, Central Piedmont moved Panopto from an on-premise server to a hosted cloud-based server solution. When the pandemic hit and classes had to shift to 100% online, that move ended up being crucial as usage quickly tripled. Instructors also began to request opening Panopto to students for creating and submitting video assignments.

“The college also had an unfortunate ransomware attack that affected many critical systems. But because Panopto was on a hosted server, the team simply re-authenticated with Panopto and administrators, instructors and students did not lose any content or services. “We had so many other things to focus on and to rebuild. To have Panopto there and working was really good for us as an IT support team, but also for our faculty and students,” said Motto. “Their lessons, everything that they had created, all that content was safe.”

Panopto’s security features also allow instructors to have control over their content. They can choose to share it with select users or groups. While some professors want to share content publicly, the security options provide reassurance for those who are more protective of their content or need to restrict access.

**Auto-transcription**

In light of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards for Accessible Design, instructors have also been impressed with Panopto’s auto-transcription features that allow them to add captions. While the ITS team initially tried different tools and processes to strip the video and create text, instructors often had to spend twice as much time correcting captions before making available to students.

Once they began using Panopto’s automated captioning tool, things changed. “I think there was a turning point as people started to realize that the Panopto speech-to-text features are better than they are in YouTube or other services,” said Motto.



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“I've gotten feedback from a lot of faculty about how good the transcription is,” added Jarvis. “Most of the instructors feel comfortable enough to do it on their own.”

## The results: Central Piedmont is well-positioned for the future

Central Piedmont has seen the value of Panopto's standardization and breadth of capabilities. While they can store and manage all content video under one standard platform, it can also be used in so many different ways depending on the individual department or instructor needs.

“We used to attend this classroom summit with a bunch of schools in the UNC system,” Jarvis recalled. “They would always offer a talk about lecture capture and a majority were talking about hardware-based devices. I would explain all the different features of Panopto, and the flexibility of it, and everybody just kind of circled around and wanted information on it.” Jarvis enjoys sharing the many creative use cases he's seen among instructors and staff, as well as the positive results across the college's departments.

Using Panopto sets Central Piedmont apart from many community colleges that may rely solely on WebEx, Zoom or Teams. “What I see at our college is the feature-rich capabilities of a single tool in being able to upload non-standard media and make it accessible, to meet captioning needs, to have

all these workflows and automatic processes happen,” said Motto. “I think that that's what other institutions are missing.”

While schools might be generating content, Central Piedmont knows that Panopto allows them to store, organize, access and search their growing library of resources so instructors and students can easily find what they need. “As we've produced more and more content, we've found that the search feature in Panopto is completely underrated,” said Motto. “We have so many different instructional pieces or assets, and instructors or students can use any keyword now and find a dozen lessons on that subject.”

Over the past 12 years, Panopto has supported the transformation of how instructors teach and deliver information, as well as how they interact and engage with students. “Once we come completely out of the COVID-19 environment, there's still going to be that need—and desire—to teach in a split format,” said Jarvis. “That's where Panopto is a good tool for instructors in that type of teaching environment, while other platforms may not work quite as well.”

Even as the college moves to hybrid or 100% in-person learning, the benefits of Panopto prove that video content is here to stay. With Panopto in place, Piedmont Central Community College is well-positioned and ready for the future.

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