

## Look, Listen, Learn: Collaboration in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century



*A study conducted by the Advanced Learning Center and the Fogelman College of Business and Economics, The University of Memphis*

The information contained in this study is a result of a professional research project conducted by Joanne Gikas, Corey Ray, Ramsan Varghese and Roy Bowery of the University of Memphis. Their contact information is listed at the end of the document.

### A Need for Collaboration Defined

With technology advancements in both computing as well as networking, ways to communicate within the academic community are rapidly expanding. There is a plethora of tools available that provide some collaboration functions from text chat, web conferencing, voice over ip conferencing, one to one and group video conferencing.

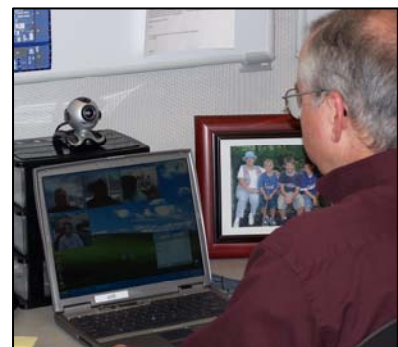
A Complete Collaboration Solution would enable the academic community to:

- Discuss research progress with colleagues from around the world without leaving the office;
- Facilitate collaboration between students and their peers at institutions around the world;
- Enable communication between a class of students and subject matter experts at work in the field of study;
- Add multiple dimensions to students learning and move them beyond traditional learning environments.

### A Collaboration Pilot Program

Members of the Advanced Learning Center (ALC) and the Fogelman College of Business and Economics (FCBE) at the University of Memphis researched desktop collaboration software for use in the academic environment. The goal was to identify an easy, low cost software and hardware desktop collaboration tool that would allow for real time communication to support teaching, learning and research.

Several collaboration tools were evaluated to determine which tool would be used for the pilot program. The group evaluated several tools, either by downloading free trial versions or by receiving live demonstrations by vendors. After months of analysis and discussion, the inSORS IG2 multimedia collaboration software product was selected.



Consideration was given to ROI (Return on Investment) by analyzing current campus network and server infrastructure, end user hardware requirements, ease of installation

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and use of software. Both quantitative and qualitative data were captured on user experience. This data provided a foundation for the needed training and support strategies to pursue the current collaboration tool.

Throughout the pilot year surveys were conducted with users to evaluate the selected tool and the effectiveness of participant interactions. From this data the team was able to identify different types of collaborations (i.e. one-to-one collaboration, multi-person collaboration or one-to-many collaboration) that illustrated potential obstacles and provided suggested strategies for conducting these collaborative sessions.

Using a desktop collaboration tool can provide the opportunity for academics and professionals to share experience and knowledge. For example, this can be done by bringing in subject matter experts, providing collaboration opportunities for students in an online learning environment and connecting researchers at different institutions.

### **The IG2 Deployment at the University of Memphis**

The Fogelman College of Business and Economics at the University of Memphis (FCBE) purchased an inSORS Unified Collaboration Grid server and software solution (UCG) along with a 50 concurrent user desktop software license pack.

The FCBE manages the UCG, which is installed on the campus network. A group composed of members of FCBE and ALC also manages the distribution of the software licenses and user id and passwords. Further, the group also is front line support for all training and software related issues with the IG2 software. They offer a web portal for users to centralize registration, training and support needs at <http://umgroups.memphis.edu/meet>

### **User Experiences**

Faculty members who normally met with their students face-to-face have also been able to set up a desktop conferencing session for students to meet for advising, collaboration, and dissertation defenses.



“I truly believe that tools such as inSORS are needed to provide a competitive educational environment at the University of Memphis. I have used inSORS in several classes where team based projects are central where video conferencing enables [distant] students to be meaningful participants on group projects. It can also be a very valuable tool to utilize in comprehensive exams enabling them to be conducted over the Internet and to include dissertation committee members who may be away from campus when the dissertation is defended.”

*James Penrod: The University of Memphis  
Prof. of Leadership: College of Education  
AT&T Fellow: Advanced Learning Center*

## The Groundwater Institute

The University of Memphis' Groundwater Institute collaborated with colleagues from around the globe to assist in the writing of a National Science Foundation (NSF) Grant.

“In scientific investigations that require collaboration between a number of academic institutions, inSORS proved to be a very valuable tool for communicating in real-time with scientists during the planning period. Video conferencing using inSORS allowed team members nationwide to play an active role in local meetings that, because of cost and travel time, would have prohibited them from attending. The compatibility of inSORS with other videoconferencing hardware/software allowed our constituents abroad to also be in attendance. inSORS is certainly an instrumental tool in our research efforts.”

*Brian Waldron: The University of Memphis  
Assistant Research Professor: Civil Engineering  
Associate Director: Ground Water Institute*



## The Tennessee Board of Regents

The Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR), The University of Memphis and other TBR institutions (from across the state) collaborated with the desktop tool to formulate the RFP (Request for Proposal) for the course management system contract renewal. By removing the need for travel, saving both time and money, this allowed for a cost effective solution for the necessary individuals to participate in the RFP process.

“[In a state with numerous geographically dispersed institutions,] inSORS has been invaluable in reducing travel and the costs associated with travel for our planning exercises between the University of Memphis and the Tennessee Board of Regents located in Nashville.”

*Tom Danford: Tennessee Board of Regents  
Chief Information Officer*



To learn more about the study or groups involved, visit the following websites:

Desktop Video Collaboration at University of Memphis using inSORS

<http://umgroups.memphis.edu/meet>

Advanced Learning Center

<http://alc.memphis.edu>

Fogelman College of Business & Economics

<http://fcbe.memphis.edu>

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inSORS Integrated Communications

<http://www.insors.com>