

Smart technology initiatives to support mobile computing



Mobile Technology is evolving rapidly and continues to drive much of the futuristic thinking for academic institutions. New generation devices, smart phones and tablet computers, have revolutionized communication and transformed the way information is delivered, accessed and made available at our fingertips. In its endeavour to be at the forefront of educational excellence, UAEU is strongly committed to a teaching and learning process that actively engages students and teachers.

Back in spring 2012, and in line with the vision of His Highness Sheikh Nahayan Mubarak Al Nahayan, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the three federal institutions of higher education in the United Arab Emirates jointly embarked on an ambitious project to introduce the use of iPads for UAE students in higher education. The integration of iPad in academic institutions can enhance productivity beyond the basic social networking & communication tools by mobilizing a series of academic and business applications.

Preparing UAEU for iPad implementation was an extensive process. The integration of smart phones and tablet devices like iPad into the UAEU enterprise infrastructure prompted a number of challenges for University IT ser-

vices to overcome within a limited time period. The major challenges were:

- empowering this new technology to deliver contents to students.
- ensuring access to academic data over mobile devices without jeopardizing security and compliance.
- mobilising, managing and distributing academic applications, messaging and collaboration tools that are already available on campus.
- developing a multi-client environment that accommodates all types of computing and mobile devices available in the market.
- creating an interactive smart classroom environment to fully utilize the functionality of mobile devices.
- building and maintaining the infrastructure that supports future technology advancement.

The initial objective of the project was to equip UAEU foundation students and faculty members in UGRU with iPad devices and relevant academic materials. Later, based on learned experiences and feedback from the initial stage, the project would be expanded to cover the remaining colleges and administrative units.