

Meet@UTHealth: A versatile new tool for virtual meetings and collaboration

By Zen Zheng

Traditionally, when work partners at UTHealth choose to meet without having to be physically at the same venue, they'd do it by the good old-fashioned telephone.

Telephone conferencing, however, relies on voice as the only medium while much of today's work communication needs can be better served also with visual help such as photos, videos and presentations merging text, images and graphs. And, add facial expression and body language to the mix and you have robust communication unmatched by what the telephone has to offer.

This week, a new tool with all these capabilities has arrived. Dubbed Meet@UTHealth, the application greatly stretches the possibilities for communication and collaboration among UTHealth faculty, staff and students and their colleagues worldwide.

Meet@UTHealth integrates audio, video and Web technologies and allows for a broad range of modes of communication – from telephone meetings to videoconferencing to Webinars to virtual collaboration.

“Meet@UTHealth is a highly versatile tool for meetings and collaboration,” says Stephen Fath, PhD, director of interactive video services at the UTHealth Office of Academic Technology who led the project to launch the application. “It allows you to meet face-to-face using a smartphone, a tablet, a computer, a meeting room conference system, or just a plain old telephone. With Internet access, you can participate in a meeting from anywhere at any convenient time.”

coSpaces: flexible, versatile, secure

Developed by the enterprise communications technology company Acano, Meet@UTHealth enables virtual meeting rooms called coSpaces, in which invited participants can communicate in real time via audio, video and Web- or desktop-content sharing, using any of the popular computing devices available today.

During a session, the participant can seamlessly switch from one type of device to another or use multiple devices at the same time. The host of the meeting can also invite and add participants during the meeting.

“Meet@UTHealth allows for meetings of various sizes,” Fath says. “It’s a great tool for activities such as project meetings, employee training, workshops and classes, and event planning. Other possibilities might include emergency management and even telemedicine because it’s a secure application.”

Meet@UTHealth is integrated with security controls with its content and connections encrypted. The user needs a passcode to enter a coSpace and a meeting participant has control over what exact content to share with fellow attendees.

For videoconferencing, Meet@UTHealth can accommodate up to 250 participants on high-definition connections only, or 500 on stand-definition connections only, or a combination of both high-definition and standard-definition connections until the maximum capacity is reached. Without using video, up to 1,500 participants could join a Web-based conference using audio and sharing Web or desktop content.

How to use Meet@UTHealth

To use Meet@UTHealth, first decide on the device or devices you want to use to enter a coSpace – a computer or mobile device and the device’s operating system.

Then install a client for the device and operating system you’ve chosen. Meet@UTHealth has different clients for PC, Mac, iPad and iPhone. All devices can access the system using the Chrome Web browser. All clients provide the same look and feel.

Next up, use the credentials assigned by UTHealth Interactive Video Services to sign in to Meet@UTHealth coSpace and start your meeting.

UTHealth faculty, staff and students can obtain credentials by emailing video@uth.tmc.edu with the subject, “Meet@UTHealth ID.” The body of the message should include your first and last name and your direct UTHealth telephone number. You will receive a confirmation and documentation that includes a user manual by email within 24 hours.

For support and further information, email Interactive Video Services at video@uth.tmc.edu or call 713-500-5201.