

Lebanese university delivers cutting-edge IT solutions with Leviton network infrastructure

Lebanon's Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK), a private Catholic institute of higher education, was founded in 1961 by the Lebanese Maronite Order. Today, USEK is one of the largest universities in Lebanon, educating more than 7,000 students every year through 15 academic units at four campuses. Most students attend the main Kaslik campus north of Beirut, while satellite campuses at Chekka, Rmeich, and Zahleh serve students in other parts of the country.

USEK takes pride in being at the forefront of social, architectural, and technological trends. They have a goal to be 100% carbon neutral by 2025, and all new construction and renovation projects are completed to LEED specifications. The new female dormitory, completed in 2007, was designed by architects Henry and Samer Eid and features sleek modern lines that encourage human interaction, rest, and study.

USEK Undertakes Major Network Improvements

In 2009, USEK determined it was time for a major voice and data network upgrade. Each campus had been operating its own IT systems, resulting in inefficient and often difficult communications. Ziad Eid (no relation), USEK's chief information officer, determined that centralizing IT operations out of the main campus was essential. MS SharePoint was installed to improve access to disparate Oracle databases and increase staff productivity. SunGard Higher Education Banner Student was also implemented to automate previously manual processes and integrate several key software programs.

One of the most important upgrades is the installation of a campus-wide identification and payment card system. Phase one of the project is complete, with card terminals installed at the library, cafeteria, vending machines, and main campus gates. Students can pay for books, copies, or lunch without having to carry cash or a bank card. In addition, campus security can verify the identity of students, faculty, and staff at the campus gates by remotely reading the card data, saving time for everyone. In phase two, card terminals will be added to classrooms, labs, and dorms, and will be able to be linked to personal bank accounts and used as a traditional debit card for off-campus purchases.

Making the Switch to Leviton

Before all of the latest IT changes, the university had been running everything over CAT 5. Eid knew that higher-bandwidth structured cabling was essential to support all of the new technologies and be ready for future applications. He decided on CAT 6 UTP and then began planning the physical installation. The university had been using the same network infrastructure vendor for years, and originally planned to continue for the recabling as well. However, when Eid and his team became aware of Leviton's structured cabling



USEK's main Kaslik campus features modern architecture and public spaces

solutions, they were intrigued. After learning more about the features and performance, they decided to do their own testing against the competition. Leviton was the clear winner.

"Leviton's product quality won us over immediately," says Eid. "Our testing showed that their CAT 6 UTP solutions consistently had better margins than the other structured cabling we considered."

Phase one of the structured cabling upgrade included approximately 200 CAT 6 drops and 60 OM2 fiber connections. Copper connectivity was terminated in the telecom rooms at QuickPort® 1RU 24-port patch panels with eXtreme® CAT 6 UTP connectors and patch cords. Work area terminations use QuickPort jacks with French bezel inserts. Fiber terminations use Fast-Cure® SC connectors and Leviton Opt-X® 500 1RU enclosures.

The installation was handled primarily by Allied Computer Services (ALCS), with support from the USEK team. Both are Leviton Authorized Network Installers, so all work can be certified and obtain extended warranty coverage.

Leviton's customer support has been as good as its product quality. "The support we've received from Leviton has been exceptional," Eid reports. "They've spent a lot of time on site throughout the project, from the design phase through installation, termination, and testing, making sure that any issues that arose could be quickly resolved. It's clear they're dedicated to our success."

An Eye Toward the Future

In addition to completing the card terminal project, USEK is planning upgrades to the satellite campuses as well. They're even contemplating establishing campuses in other Middle East countries. Whatever projects come up, Leviton will be there, providing the products and service that USEK has come to count on.