A Unified Approach to Campus Communication with Microsoft Teams and AudioCodes Voca CIC

Microsoft Teams is a powerful communications solution, offering a robust set of native features and a rich ecosystem of partners that allow organizations to extend and expand the product to fit specialized needs.

The University of Central Florida (UCF) provides a compelling use case. A modern university campus has a broad set of communications needs extending far beyond the lecture hall. Like many of its peers, UCF is a complex organization with a clear educational mission, but its diverse requirements span from classrooms to residential services to live sports and entertainment.

This paper examines how UCF created a robust Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS) and Contact Center as a Service (CCaaS) solution by combining Microsoft Teams with AudioCodes Voca Conversational Interaction Center (CIC). Microsoft and AudioCodes have a 15-plus-year partnership, providing certified voice infrastructure, AI-powered conversational tools, and managed services to enhance Teams Phone, Meetings, and Contact Center capabilities. UCF implemented several AudioCodes solutions, including session border controllers (SBCs), Voca CIC, and AudioCodes Mobile Connect. The resulting capabilities enable UCF to support the needs of its diverse user community and provide efficient operations and support capabilities for its IT and administration staff.

Introduction to the University of Central Florida

Located in the vibrant and rapidly expanding Orlando metropolitan area, UCF stands as one of the largest and most dynamic public universities in the United States. Established to support the burgeoning US space program at Cape Canaveral, UCF's identity is inextricably linked to innovation, technology, and future-forward thinking.

Today, the university has grown far beyond its original mandate, yet this spirit of striving for excellence and technological integration remains central to its culture. The main campus itself is a massive, complex ecosystem that functions akin to a small city, serving a student body that can exceed 68,000, supported by approximately 13,000 employees. This immense scale necessitates a sophisticated infrastructure that exceeds typical educational requirements, encompassing extensive residential services, cutting-edge research facilities, a robust public safety department, and a major intercollegiate athletics program.

UCF's location in the heart of Florida provides unique opportunities for partnerships in simulation, aerospace, and tourism, making it a hub for diverse operational needs. The university's ongoing efforts to expand access, integrate modern technology, and manage a large, distributed population make it a compelling case study of the challenges and rewards of modernizing communications for a large-scale enterprise.

The Hustle and Bustle of a Major University

Large universities are far more than a collection of classrooms and lecture halls; they function as complex, self-sustaining ecosystems analogous to cities. In the case of the University of Central Florida, this "city" has a population exceeding 125,000 stakeholders—including students, faculty, staff, and visitors—mirroring the logistical and social structure of a midsized American city.

Consider the infrastructure and services required to keep it running 24/7:

Governance and Public Safety

Just as a city has a mayor and a police department, UCF maintains specialized administrative leadership and its own police force. The UCF Police Department provides around-the-clock patrolling, emergency response, and investigations, ensuring the safety of a population larger than the city of Fort Lauderdale. The university operates its own alert systems and disaster response protocols, similar to a municipal Emergency Operations Center.

Infrastructure and Utilities

A university of this scale cannot simply "plug in" to the local grid without massive internal management. UCF operates its own micro-economy of utilities, managing high-capacity power grids and water systems to support massive research labs and its residential halls. To facilitate the movement of thousands of "commuters" daily, UCF manages a fleet of buses, miles of maintained roadways, and complex parking structures.

Diverse "Zoning" and Real Estate

In urban planning, a city is divided into residential, commercial, and industrial zones, and UCF follows a nearly identical pattern. Thousands of students live on campus in dormitories that function like high-density apartment complexes. The university also has "office" users (faculty and administration) and "industrial" users (high-tech research labs and medical facilities) that have high energy demands and specific safety requirements. There are also commercial spaces, including restaurants, healthcare and pharmacies, retail infrastructure, and entertainment venues.

Ultimately, UCF experiences the same challenges as any modern city—traffic congestion, waste management, and public health—while simultaneously fulfilling its primary mission of education and innovation. The complex communications needs of this diverse community are met by combining Microsoft Teams with solutions from AudioCodes.

UCF Turned to Microsoft Teams

Microsoft Teams offers UCF a single, cloud-delivered service for unified communications as a service (UCaaS), facilitating telephony, collaboration, meetings, and remote learning. Microsoft Teams consolidates and streamlines operations for IT management by reducing vendor sprawl and providing a consistent user experience.

Before standardizing on Microsoft Teams for campus-wide communications, UCF had implemented Skype for Business, and Teams inherited the Session Border Controller (SBC) infrastructure that had powered its Skype for Business servers. While the campus is evaluating moving to cloud-delivered PSTN services, the AudioCodes SBCs have proven to be reliable and secure and remain in service. AudioCodes also provided UCF with phones and troubleshooting tools to monitor its voice solution.

For its cloud infrastructure, UCF selected Microsoft Azure and prioritized applications that run on Azure.

"We view ourselves as a provider," said Keith Honaker, UCF's manager of AI and Automation, and member of

the team responsible for the implementation of its Microsoft Teams and AudioCodes solutions. "In that sense, we evaluate our technologies at a provider level. Our operations and reliability improve when we implement solutions on Azure."

CX with AudioCodes Voca CIC

To support a "small city" of 200,000 users, UCF needed to address requirements beyond Teams' core capabilities. The first priority was the university's 30-plus contact centers across its diverse departmental structure. Teams alone proved insufficient to meet the need for sophisticated routing, reporting, automations, and agent management systems. As the costs climbed for manually supporting and maintaining the environment, the school evaluated more contemporary options.

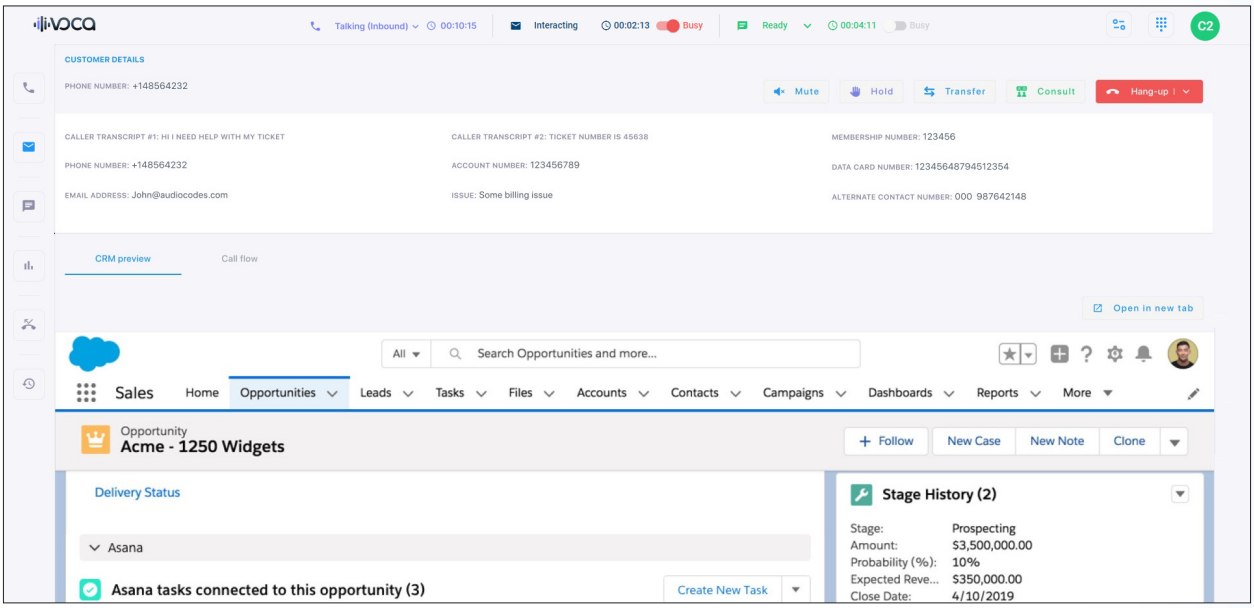
UCF turned to AudioCodes, its incumbent provider of SBCs, and discovered Voca CIC. AudioCodes Voca CIC enhances Teams with intelligent call routing; omni-channel, customer-facing, and agent-side AI experiences; and carrier-grade reliability. It bridges, complements, and extends Microsoft Teams environments, eliminating the need to build a parallel infrastructure.

A primary objective of standardizing on Teams was to simplify and facilitate communications. After evaluating "almost everyone" in the market, UCF selected AudioCodes Voca CIC. According to Honaker, the choice was a slam dunk for many reasons, but the big three were reliability, ease of use, and the Azure-native integration between Voca and Teams Phone.

"We processed over 2 million calls last year through Voca," said Honaker, who sought to replace the outdated "press one, press two" interactive voice response menus with modern conversational and generative AI-powered solutions. Voca CIC meets this need, allowing callers to speak naturally to the system.

Voca CIC also supports granular access management, which allowed Honaker to delegate light administrative tasks, such as adding and removing users, to individual departments. "I've enabled my customers to do small changes themselves. They prefer this, and it eliminates the need for them to open service tickets. Additionally, the Flow Designer in Voca provides my customers with a powerful canvas to implement improvements."

"Voca CIC is very strong with integrations, and that was critical, too. UCF has [at least] 27 CRMs [customer relationship management systems]," Honaker continued "Flow Designer proved to be even simpler than connecting to each CRM. For example, UCF could implement after-hours routing by sending calls to night groups in



Microsoft Teams. The call simply routes to whoever is logged in, [which is] far simpler than the schedule lookups. This is a huge win for us."

Voca CIC Key Capabilities

Voca CIC extends the Teams platform with essential contact center functionality:

Feature Category	Description
Teams Native Experience	Certified under the Unify integration model powered by Teams Phone Extensibility, agents manage all calls and interactions directly within their familiar Teams application, simplifying training and minimizing screen and context switching. 99.999% uptime for voice is inherited from the Microsoft Teams Phone SLA.
Intelligent Routing	Offers skills-based routing, Presence, Interactive Voice Response (IVR), Interactive Voice Agents (IVAs) and self-service options to efficiently connect callers to the right resource, reducing hold times.
Analytics and Reporting	Includes tools for call recording, analytics, and reporting critical for performance analysis and improvements.
Scalability	Supports both small, departmental queues (e.g., advising offices) and large, centralized help desks (e.g., IT support), offering necessary flexibility for a university.

Voca CIC further integrates AI capabilities to automate and optimize the service experience:

- **Intelligent Self-Service:** Conversational IVR and AI Voice Agents allow students and faculty to resolve common queries using natural language, significantly reducing reliance on live agents.
- **Post-Interaction Analysis:** Generative AI automatically transcribes and summarizes interactions, which reduces agent wrap-up time, ensures accurate customer records, and identifies emerging trends or compliance risks.

By deploying Voca CIC, UCF achieved a single, cohesive unified communications (UC) and contact center (CC) platform, leveraging its existing infrastructure and consolidating operations while delivering high-quality, AI-enhanced customer service. The next big challenge involved extending the solution beyond campus infrastructure.

Mobility Reimagined with AudioCodes Mobile Connect

Perhaps the most challenging communication requirement for UCF involved its frontline, in-field, and deskless employees, such as campus police and maintenance crews. While feature-rich, the full Microsoft Teams mobile client proved too complex and bandwidth-intensive for many of these workers.

AudioCodes Mobile Connect enables organizations to extend Teams calls into the cellular network, turning cellular phones into native Teams extensions. With Mobile Connect, mobile users can use their cell phones and their native dialers naturally. Calls are logged just like all Teams calls, including advanced AI treatments, and phone numbers can be managed from

softphones to smartphones. Because calls transferred from Voca CIC to an AudioCodes Mobile Connect endpoint are still "internal," contact center analytics, such as call sentiment and recording, remain active even when calls are transferred to external subject matter experts.

UCaaS mobile apps can be seen as a contradiction to unified communications. Why implement an app to make phone calls on a phone designed to make phone calls? AudioCodes Mobile Connect turns smartphones into Teams Phones, allowing any mobile phone, including flip phones, to become a native Microsoft Teams extension. Mobile Connect can be implemented on a dedicated mobile phone or, more commonly, as a second SIM on an existing mobile phone, often a personal or Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) phone. The latter approach can eliminate the need to carry two phones (personal and work) and relieve the University of the obligation to purchase or reimburse mobile phones. Honaker said the second SIM approach provides an option to move away from reimbursements, simplifying operations and reducing University expenses while simultaneously increasing customer satisfaction.

For employees, the SIM approach offers two big benefits. First, SIM-based calling and messaging offer higher-quality wireless service compared to internet-based apps, resulting in better experiences. Second, these phones require no software, which employees often associate with spyware. Employees can use their personal devices while maintaining a clear separation between work and personal demands. The result is that the mobile phone, as a Teams phone, is native and intuitive. No app is required, although some still install it to gain access to the full suite of features.

AudioCodes Voca CIC + Mobile Connect: UCaaS + CCaaS + Mobility

By combining Voca CIC with AudioCodes Mobile Connect, Microsoft Teams powers a consistent experience across desk phones, softphones, and smartphones. This creates one system, one numbering plan, one administrative portal, with comprehensive analytics and reports across a wide range of personas and devices. Key benefits include:

1. **Native Calling Integration:** In-field employees can use their smartphone's native dialer to make and receive calls, presenting their university Teams phone number. This approach bypasses the complexity of the full Teams client while offering reliability and an intuitive user experience.

2. **Dual-SIM Persona Separation:** The solution supports the use of two SIMs on a mobile device: one for personal use and the other university-owned and managed for work. The user can easily select the preferred SIM for an outbound call, ensuring the work call is logged and routed through the university infrastructure. One device, easily divided between personal and work usage.

3. **Intelligent Routing:** Calls can be transferred to experts on their Teams mobile phone based on Teams Presence, using the native SIM rather than an app. External subject matter experts are readily accessible via their native smartphone experience, while the call center stays connected for recording, sentiment analysis, metrics, and AI-driven actions such as summarization.

4. **Empowering Remote Agents:** This solution bridges the gap between first-line workers and traditional contact center agents.

5. **SIM-First, Native Cell Calls:** No need for an over-the-top application—the solution prioritizes SIM-based, native cell calls. The app is optional, and even basic phones like flip phones work fine.

6. **Cost and Efficiency Gains:** UCF avoids the expense of purchasing and managing separate corporate devices or reimbursing personal phone usage by simply managing the work SIM, which can be provisioned easily via a QR code.

7. **Single Infrastructure:** Microsoft Teams becomes the single campus-wide solution for university calling and messaging, with one numbering plan, one set of administrative controls, and a single set of policies and controls for campus-wide calling, including off-campus users and even international locations.

"I've got employees who live in Teams. They heavily use the messaging and calling features of Teams; I can serve them better and cheaper with AudioCodes Mobile Connect. [Then] I've got employees who have no use for the broader capabilities of Teams; they just want reliable calling. I can deliver that, too, and even give them abbreviated internal dialing while leveraging my Teams infrastructure and security," said Honaker. "I've also got campus police that require phones to be compliant with the Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) requirements, that I can support with our infrastructure and services."

AudioCodes Mobile Connect addresses numerous problems from a UCaaS perspective, but it's particularly important for the contact centers. "It retains our advanced tools, even after we route calls to subject matter experts." Remote employees become reachable on "internal" extensions, which are logged per campus policies. These "internal" wireless extensions can even be assigned to agents. As Honaker explained, "We actually can build quick call centers for visiting athletics teams by giving them E-SIMs. We can also create ad-hoc contact center groups easily with Voca CIC and Mobile Connect. It's so powerful to have a cellular option that is fully compatible with the contact center infrastructure [reporting, analytics, recording, etc.] that we have built."

Achieving Comprehensive Unified Communications with Microsoft Teams and AudioCodes

The UCF case study demonstrates the effectiveness of a unified communications strategy built on Microsoft Teams, significantly enhanced by AudioCodes' specialized solutions: Voca Conversational Interaction Center (CIC) and AudioCodes Mobile Connect. This combination allowed UCF to surpass the core capabilities of Teams to meet the complex, city-scale operational and customer experience demands of a major university.

While Microsoft Teams provided a powerful foundation for UCaaS, standardizing collaboration and core telephony, the university's diverse needs necessitated specialized extensions. AudioCodes Voca CIC addressed the sophisticated requirements of UCF's 30-plus departmental contact centers. By integrating Voca CIC with Microsoft Teams, UCF leveraged its Teams infrastructure for the contact center and gained advanced CX capabilities. This consolidation eliminated the need for a separate contact center infrastructure, streamlining IT management and improving customer experience by connecting callers more efficiently to the right resource. Hosting Voca CIC in Azure aligns with UCF's strategic cloud infrastructure priorities.

Furthermore, AudioCodes Mobile Connect solved the critical challenge of providing secure, reliable, and intuitive communication for UCF's vast population of deskless and frontline employees, including campus police and maintenance crews. By turning any mobile device, even personal smartphones, into a native Teams extension via SIM-based technology, AudioCodes Mobile Connect enabled two key benefits: enhanced call reliability through native carrier service prioritization and improved work-life balance for employees via dual-SIM persona separation. For the university, this ensured that all mobile communications—both UC and CC related—remained within the Teams infrastructure for consistent logging, recording, and policy enforcement, thereby extending the value of the platform to the entire campus ecosystem.

The successful deployment at UCF illustrates that by leveraging the complementary nature of Microsoft Teams and the specialized voice infrastructure and CX solutions from AudioCodes, large-scale enterprises can create a truly unified, compliant, and highly efficient communications environment that serves a diverse user base across all operational scenarios.

About AudioCodes

AudioCodes is a global leader in enterprise voice technology and Voice AI innovation. AudioCodes helps organizations unlock the full value of voice, transforming every conversation into a strategic asset that drives smarter decisions, better experiences and business growth. Their portfolio spans secure voice infrastructure, unified communications and contact center, with next-generation AI-powered voice solutions. With over 30 years of expertise and a presence in more than 100 countries, AudioCodes is trusted by 65 of the Fortune 100 to power intelligent, agile and future-ready interactions across the enterprise. Website: www.audiocodes.com.

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