Sunlands Technology Group is the largest online education provider in China, with 128 campuses and a userbase that is 600,000 students strong. Its appeal? All programs—100 percent of them—are completely online. The company transitioned from the traditional educational model to a digital, fully functional “mobile first” approach in 2016. This kind of technological advantage is why UCR Extension is excited to welcome them as their newest educational partner, and has already begun collaborating on programs and presenting courses—with an initial audience of 1,250 students.

In July, D Dayton, academic director of International Custom Programs, wrapped up a successfully implemented first module for students of Sunlands. It was a pioneering effort for UCR Extension— instructional staff wrote the content, scripts, and supporting materials, and videotaped the presentations. Next year, students will be able to enroll in up to three more programs.

Lessons are livestreamed from one of the company’s four branches. “They broadcast from microstudios that look like telephone booths. They’re small, but contained, and have everything needed to interact with their audience,” says Dayton.

Students attend classes, take exams, and complete assignments using an app designed specifically to support content, video, and other classroom needs. “We produce all the course content and teaching materials ourselves, but we utilize Sunlands’ understanding of the Chinese market to help students engage with the content,” Dayton continues. Sunlands’ structure reflects how adult learners in China have not only adapted to technology—mobile and otherwise—but have also embraced it as integral to learning and advancement.

In short, Sunlands has pioneered an approach to education in China that students are very responsive to—and UCR Extension is now a part of this process. The inaugural course’s success ensured more offerings slated for the next few years. Dayton and his team plan to bring UCR Extension programs in project management and data science into Sunlands.

What does all this mean for UCR Extension? The partnership with Sunlands not only presents a greater and more diverse student base, but also sets a precedent for engaging other large markets like Southeast Asia and India.

Offering completely online courses supports UCR Extension’s dedication to advancing education using innovative, digital tools. Through 2020 and beyond, UCR Extension’s goal is to meet the current demand for high-quality course content using a refined, integrative, online platform—accessible from any location. Dayton summarizes, “This partnership is about UCR Extension really exploring the online learning environment, becoming a central hub of online education, and taking our place as an international leader in high-tech program delivery.”

If you would like to become a partner with UCR Extension, email Associate Dean Jean-Bernard “JB” Adrey at jbadrey@ucx.ucr.edu, call 951.827.4346, or visit www.iep.ucr.edu. We can’t wait to work with you!