

William Jewell College

LIBERTY, MO

CASE STUDY | EDUCATION

→ Challenge

Define collaborative learning for a top-ranked liberal arts college in Missouri, then create practical, reliable, extremely flexible technology to support it.

→ Solution

William Jewell College chooses Crestron AirMedia™ for its new Pryor Learning Commons



Photo courtesy of AV+Design

Active Learning

Collaborative workstations based on wireless Crestron AirMedia technology, used in classrooms, study rooms, and common areas are linked by a Crestron DigitalMedia™ network.

“We wanted a place that would be the intellectual center of our campus, where students have access to information in an environment that encourages creativity, collaboration, and active learning,” said Dr. Anne Dema, Provost of William Jewell College.

“We’ve always encouraged personal interaction with our faculty, but we’ve come to realize that our students don’t need their professors for information—they have Google® for that,” adds Elise Fisher, Director of Instructional Technology. “They do need to learn the skills of thinking, understanding and solving problems.”

After more than five years of planning, the school has opened its newest facility as a place where students can learn together and where professors can try out the latest teaching methods, find out what really works and propagate it across campus.



Out-of-the-box, AirMedia performed as advertised. It was easy to install and integrate.”

— **Scott Strong,**
Mission Electronics,
Project Manager



William Jewell is a logical place for this kind of experiment, since the college has always emphasized instruction. It's a place where there are only 11 students for every faculty member, where the largest room on campus seats only 48, and the average undergraduate class size is just 16. It's a place where the controversial "flipped classroom" teaching method that emphasizes discussion and dialog rather than lecture is not controversial at all.

Among the many innovations are collaborative workstations and classrooms using Crestron AirMedia to facilitate the sharing of ideas and information.

Kansas City-based communication technologies and products integrator, Mission Electronics, programmed and installed the technology in the Pryor Learning Commons.

Understanding the learning commons concept

If you were to visit the new Pryor Learning Commons, most likely you'd enter from the first floor, where you'd be greeted by a welcome display and a touch screen kiosk with information about the campus.

Once inside, you'd find a large, open common area with comfortable seating and three "collaboration

tables," each of which includes a 40" flat screen display, seating for four students, multiple wireless AirMedia connections, one wired input to the display, and a five-inch Crestron touch screen that controls input selection.

"We emphasized access to information, interactivity, and collaboration in designing the technology for this building," explains Joe Nickell, principal of AV Plus Design, Inc., a sound and video system design consultancy based in Shawnee Mission, Kansas.

Thus, a large classroom on this level has two 80" touch-sensitive displays at the front set up to work as interactive whiteboards, plus three continuous walls of glass marker boards, four 55" flat screens on the side walls, as well as a document camera, Blu-ray® player, sound system, and a 24" Crestron touch screen with annotation capability.

Students work in groups of six at eight star-shaped tables, each with a hard-wired computer input plus wireless AirMedia inputs. Students can use their own laptops or mobile devices to send images to the wall-mounted displays, to others in the group, or to the entire class. The tabletops also have whiteboard surfaces, so that students can draw on them with dry-erase pens.



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— **Craig Helphingstine,**
Mission Electronics, CEO

A second “Innovation Studio” includes four student collaborative work tables, an 80” touch-sensitive interactive display plus five additional 40” displays, a document camera, Blu-ray player, 24” Crestron touch screen with annotation, and a sound system.

One of the most interesting pieces of technology in the Innovation Studio is a Crestron Capture HD® recording device tied to a video conferencing system and its PTZ cameras. The school uses this combined system in three ways. First, they can bring in guest speakers to address classes or other groups from distant sites without the need to travel to the campus. Second, they can record student presentations. Third, they can record the way students interact in class, so instructors can fine-tune their collaborative teaching methods.

The ground floor also includes five media studios, each focused on an aspect of video or audio production. “Students can use these rooms to explore the digital tools they will use in the real world,” Nickell explains, “for example make a YouTube® video and narrate it, practice job interviews, or create a presentation for a class project.”

In a way the whole building is a media studio. It’s open 24/7 to anyone with a student ID, and the classrooms are never locked. The technology is always available for student use.



The middle floor includes a large open common area for meetings and study, three offices and two group study rooms, each of which includes a collaborative workstation. There’s also a faculty commons with AirMedia collaborative capabilities.

The top floor or “quad level” features an entrance from the campus quadrangle, also with an interactive greeting kiosk, a cafe for students, an open common area, plus three group study rooms, each with a collaborative workstation.

The two classrooms and a building-wide CATV system are united by a Crestron DigitalMedia™ network with two DM32X32 matrix switchers allowing users to switch any source device to any combination of displays.

“All of the technology in this building is very scalable,” says Nickell. “You can combine the classrooms, common areas and other spaces for a meeting or event on one floor, or throughout the facility.”



To help students best take advantage of these resources, the classrooms, studios, and collaborative study rooms are tied into an Outlook® calendar using Crestron Fusion™ and Crestron scheduling panels mounted outside each door. Students and staff can reserve these rooms via the panels, or from their computers and other devices, and they can tell at a glance which spaces are available at any given time.

AirMedia

Dema says AV Plus Design and the technology committee had several criteria in mind when designing the collaborative systems. “We knew we wanted an environment where our students could talk to each other easily and see what everyone was doing. It had to be wireless, because that’s the way our students work. We also know that most of them have multiple devices, including laptops, tablets, and smartphones. They want to be able to use whatever they happen to have in hand at a given moment.” AirMedia fit all these requirements.

“When the Crestron AirMedia system came out, we were amazed at the price. It was reasonable and allowed the school to save a lot of money,

while getting a better user experience,” said Craig Helpingstine, Mission Electronics, CEO.

“The school was able to manage assets and put the device on their wireless network. It was a no-brainer to install AirMedia,” added Scott Strong, Mission Electronics, Project Manager.

According to Dema and Fisher, the results of all this effort have been well worthwhile. “The day we opened this new building our students filled it – and it’s been in constant use ever since,” Dema says.

“They’re excited about it and they’re embracing it... I think we got it right.”

“Every time you walk in, there are groups of students in front of the TV with their laptops. The technology is heavily utilized,” noted Helpingstine.

“Out-of-the-box, AirMedia performed as advertised. It was easy to install and integrate,” added Strong.

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