Towson University
Liberal Arts Building

Baltimore, Maryland

Crestron Incorporates 21st Century Technology into Towson University's Liberal Arts Building

Background

Located eight miles north of Baltimore, Towson University is recognized among the nation's best regional public universities, offering programs in the liberal arts and sciences, and applied professional fields. Linthicum Hall formerly housed many liberal arts courses but was outdated and did not offer the modern technologies that faculty members required for their courses.

Towson built the new 300,000 square foot, $124 million Liberal Arts Building to bring the entire liberal arts unit into one fully functioning facility. The building features classrooms of varying sizes - holding 20 to 90 — to allow easy contact between faculty members and students.

The Challenge

The campus historically used a combination of multiple manufacturers' AV solutions and devices across the institution so there was little consistency among classrooms, labs and lounges. A large number of instructors have a wide range of technical proficiency and expect the technology to be accessible no matter where they are on campus.

"Before the new building, there were six classrooms with projectors and built in equipment," said Michael Bachman, Director of Information Technology Client Services and Adjunct Faculty, Computer and Information Sciences at Towson University. "Faculty without technology had to call the library for portable delivery of an AV cart."

Campus support staff's limited resources and ability to support the expansion of systems support has been an

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obstacle for creating a cohesive institution. The sheer quantity of learning spaces in this new building required a complete review of the campus approach to standard classroom technology.

Through a multi-phased integration process, Baltimore-based Convergent Technologies Design Group and Roanoke, VA-based AV Integrator, Lee Hartman & Sons, were tasked with enhancing the existing campus AV standards to incorporate new technologies and provide instructors with the latest educational tools.

The Solution

Convergent Technologies worked with campus Facilities Management Department, The College of Liberal Arts Dean, faculty groups and the Office of Technology Services to develop and define how instructional spaces were to be used and how instructional technologies could be integrated into each space. To deliver a consistent user interface, centralized monitoring and remote support in every space, Crestron AV control systems and RoomView® Server Edition software were implemented.

The Crestron control solution allowed for a simplified instructor interface, complete system control, centralized help-desk support, remote troubleshooting capabilities and a single unified system for monitoring and reporting on the status of more than 80 classrooms in the new Liberal Arts Building.

" The faculty is excited about the new opportunity to use technology in their courses."

Dr. Terry Cooney, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts

Systems at a Glance

A Crestron PRO2 control system enables simple touch screen control of numerous AV devices including video projectors, plasma displays, switchers, DVD players, screens and lifts.

A Crestron TPS-6L touch screen is lectern-mounted and gives instructors convenient one-touch system control of the whole room. The TPS-6L combines 12 "hard" buttons on the left and right sides of the touch screen. The graphical user interface (GUI) in classrooms was designed to reflect a Towson

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University style, color and aesthetic appearance. The instructor interface had to be as simple as possible, allowing any teacher to operate the system, while enabling full functional control for all AV devices as needed.

Through customized programming provided by Lee Hartman & Sons, instructors enjoy a simplified touch screen interface with complete room control. With a tap of the screen, icons are displayed for the PC, DVD/VHS player, laptop, iPod®, document camera and lights. Instructors simply choose their desired mode of presentation and, with a press on the icon, the screen lowers and the projector powers on.

When the session is over, another button press reverses the process, shuts the system down and prompts for the next class. In addition to high performance room control, the TPS-6L offers professors 16-bit color graphics of presentation content and full-motion video viewable in easily scalable window sizes.

RoomView enterprise management software allows IT staff to control, monitor and troubleshoot all AV and room lighting in each classroom, remotely from the central support desk.

RoomView also allows Towson staff to take over a remote touchpanel in any classroom. This provides hands-on support without a technician physically visiting the classroom.

The building now offers room-to-room rebroadcast of AV content and central lecture capture using the software. Each room is equipped with a dual-image projector which allows two simultaneous images to be projected side-by-side for engaging content display.

Benefits and Results

The College of Liberal Arts building now serves as the new standard for AV instructional systems on campus. "The building is programmed to establish a new standard for the campus," said Dr. Terry Cooney, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts.

Benefits for the IT Department can be found in the reduction of support calls. "Support calls have decreased significantly as faculty become familiar with the new system," Cooney added.

Towson's faculty is excited about the new easy-to-use technologies available to them. Future plans include recording lectures and streaming the content online for students using RoomView.

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