Building For A New Century

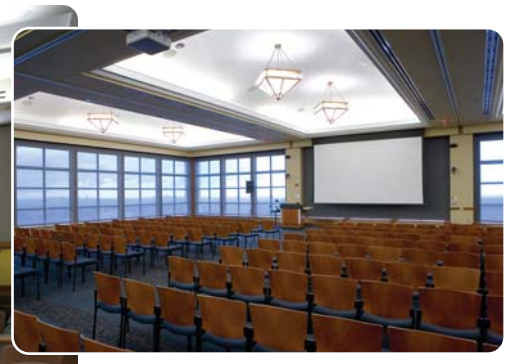
Montclair State University Enhances Education And Collaboration With New Facility

by Elaine Jones

MONTCLAIR, NJ—New Jersey's Montclair State University is the state's fastest-growing university. The school offers a wide range of both undergraduate and graduate programs, including the United States' only doctorate in pedagogy and New Jersey's only doctorate in audiology. Only 14 miles away from New York City, the 246-acre campus has traditionally been home to over 16,000 students. School administrators plan to grow this number to over 18,000 within the next two years.

As part of the school's growth plan, a new facility providing advanced AV capabilities was opened in 2006. University Hall brings more than 60 state-of-the-art classrooms, lecture halls, laboratories and study lounges to Montclair along with a sophisticated conference center. Seven auditorium classrooms in University Hall each accommodate more than 100 students. IP technologies are used extensively; MSU recently joined the Internet 2 backbone and also implemented broadband AV capabilities campus-wide for staff and students. University Hall offers IP-based videoconferencing, IP-based room control, and distribution of audio and video room content over Cat-5 cabling throughout the building.

The AV system design for University Hall was created by New York-based consulting firm Shen Milsom & Wilke. Allentown, PA system integrator Vistacom provided installation and configuration. "As with most school installations, we had a tight time frame for completing the project," said Jim Ferlino, Vistacom vice president. "We had to wait until the rooms were clean and secure, but needed to finish the rooms before classes began. To overcome this challenge, we developed a time line with the university where we had as many as 20 people on site for several weekends in a row."



MIKE PETERS, MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

Twelve classrooms and lecture halls at Montclair State University are equipped with Polycom video and voice conferencing products, including Polycom's VSX 8000 video codecs which provide multipoint IP connections, giving students a tiled view of all endpoints that are connected during a class session.

The rich media capabilities of the classrooms include DVD record/playback, document cameras, internet access, and data connections. Twelve of the classrooms/lecture halls are also equipped with Polycom video and voice conferencing products. Polycom's VSX 8000 video codecs provide multipoint IP connections, giving students a tiled view of all endpoints that are connected during a class session. Vortex EF2280 and EF2241 installed voice systems are used for audio mixing as well as echo and noise cancellation.

To maximize student participation in the lecture halls while minimizing ambient noise and other distractions, Vistacom installed Bosch Digital Conference Network microphone systems, which are sold exclusively in North America by Listen Technologies Corporation. "The Bosch microphones were selected for their quality and connectability," said John O'Brien, assistant director for academic technology at Montclair's Office of Information Technology. "Some rooms have more than 100 microphones. We have the system set up to have up to four microphones open at once. When another participant presses a microphone button, the first open mic is dropped out. This minimizes system feedback and keeps the microphone audio under control," said O'Brien. The microphones are used both for local sound reinforcement during class sessions and for videoconferences with other locations. Additional Bosch microphones have been implemented in rooms near the lecture halls that can be used for overflow audiences during large conferences.

Throughout University Hall, an extensive Crestron IP-based control system was set up by Vistacom. "Monclair's IT staff had a very clear idea of what they wanted to do with the control system," said Vistacom's Ferlino. The school's goal was to make room control nearly identical in each of the classrooms and lecture halls, which would simplify the learning curve for instructors and allow them to concentrate on lecture content no matter which room was used. Montclair's IT department also required centralized control of media devices in the classrooms, lecture halls, and the conference center. This enables IT personnel to remotely monitor media devices used throughout the building to ensure proper operation and keep technology as transparent as possible to instructors. As of this writing, the feature-rich control system was still being fine-tuned by Vistacom and MSU, but MSU IT staffers say it nonetheless keeps things running smoothly in the building.

In addition to the new classrooms and lecture halls, University Hall's 7th floor encompasses a state-of-the-art conference center that boasts a breathtaking view of the nearby New York City skyline. The conference center encompasses a large banquet room that seats up to 500 people. The room is subdividable into as many as six smaller rooms that each holds 40 to 50 people, with each subdivided room completely outfitted with rich media video capabilities. Each sub-dividable section of the conference center includes access to Polycom voice and video conferencing systems for real-time interaction with endpoints outside the conference center. Content can be managed individually for each break-out room or in as many combinations as needed for an event.

- **Crestron...**www.crestron.com
- **Listen Technologies...** www.listentech.com
- **Polycom...**www.polycom.com
- **Shen Milsom & Wilke...** www.smwinc.com
- **Vistacom...**www.vistacominc.com

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