



Government / Education

Daily Use

- Interactive distance learning
- Access to content experts and guest lecturers
- Project coordination

Solution

- Polycom® RealPresence™ Experience High Definition Immersive Telepresence Solution

Results and Benefits

- \$30,000 cost savings for the planning of one series of symposia alone
- Increased productivity due to decreased time spent on travel
- Enhanced educational experience through increased exposure to expertise regardless of where it is located

National Defense University Builds 'Classroom of the Future' with Polycom® Immersive Telepresence

The National Defense University (NDU) vision is to be the pre-eminent institution for education, research, and outreach in national and international security. Its mission is to prepare military and civilian leaders from the United States and other countries to evaluate national and international security challenges through multi-disciplinary educational and research programs, professional exchanges, and outreach. The university serves several thousand military and civilian students annually between its main campus on Fort Lesley J. McNair in Washington, D.C. and the Joint Forces Staff College located in Norfolk, Virginia.

A key component of NDU is the Information Resources Management College (NDU iCollege). Over the last 20+ years, the purpose of the NDU iCollege has evolved from educating students in information and information technologies to providing critical knowledge in various formats and connecting them with other information leaders. But in the current economic climate, this has become increasingly difficult to accomplish. Gaining access to global expertise had become cost prohibitive and required a new approach.

Dr. Robert Childs, Senior Director of the NDU iCollege, is tasked with getting people to use information and information technology for strategic advantage, so it is only fitting that he and his colleague Dr. Marwan Jamal, professor and technology advisor at the college, addressed the challenge head on.

Taking on the Challenge with the Classroom of the Future

"At NDU's iCollege, we work to enable federal government and Department of Defense leaders to find solutions that will save lives, save money and allow people to do their work more productively by utilizing technology," says Dr. Jamal.

One of the latest Information Resources Management College initiatives is to implement the "Classroom of the Future," which enables unlimited collaboration and is capable of mimicking real life regardless of where students are physically located.

"From a cost standpoint, we can't send people all over world to learn or physically bring expertise in from around world as a resource for our students," explains Dr. Childs. "That's why we integrated immersive

"... [W]e integrated immersive telepresence solutions into the Classroom of the Future, to both bring in expertise regardless of the location of the expert...and export our expertise all over the world."

Dr. Robert Childs, Senior Director, NDU Information Resources Management College



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Enabling Lifelike Interaction

NDU’s iCollege has deployed the Polycom® RealPresence™ Experience High Definition™ (RPX™ HD) 200 Series System. This virtual classroom seats up to 18 people and is used for the NDU iCollege’s 14-week long distance learning courses, administrative and planning meetings, as well as bringing in guest speakers from all over the world.

Dr. Childs, who has been recognized by the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association (AFCEA International) for his leadership in information technology, had his staff conduct an intensive competitive analysis of all of the telepresence offerings on the market before ultimately choosing the Polycom RPX system.

The Import and Export of Ideas

One of the key uses of the telepresence solution is offering the college’s expertise to remote locations and bringing in expertise to improve the learning experience for its students. Dr. Jamal explains, “We have a lot of courses that we will bring private industry expertise into. For example, we’ll invite the CTO of Sprint to provide expertise for our global enterprise networking course.”

Another highly anticipated use of the telepresence environment is intensive collaboration with colleagues in Singapore for the planning of the college’s bi-annual international symposium.

“Our telepresence room will be used heavily in the next several months to get our international symposia planned. For the Singapore event, we will have regular meetings over telepresence to arrange all of the details, including speakers, venues, events,” says Dr. Jamal. “Rather than communicating by e-mail or phone, we’ll be able sit down and run collaborative sessions. And we won’t be sending teams of two or three people half way around world, flying 30 hours just to get the planning done.”

Dr. Childs also see the potential for leveraging the telepresence solution for continuity of operations if, for example, something like the swine flu causes disruption.

Impacting the Bottom Line, Improving Relationships

The availability of a telepresence classroom on the NDU campus is also having an impact on the organization’s bottom line. “The average cost for one person to go to Singapore for four to five days is close to \$5,000,” explains Dr. Jamal. “Take that number and multiply it by numerous meeting participants and it becomes pretty substantial. And this is just one of our conferences. The same is true for the cost of bringing guest speakers into our classrooms on a regular basis; it’s a large number at the end of the day.”

Dr. Childs notes that the NDU iCollege is starting to put on conferences around the world—in the Far East, Europe, and the Middle East. “You simply can’t take all the expertise over there. If we want a faculty member or high-level government executive to give a two-hour presentation, paying \$5,000 to send them to the Middle East or Asia just doesn’t make sense. But you can bring them into the telepresence room and get that expertise and project the presence of that person into the conference or classroom,” says Childs.

In addition, the interactive nature of a telepresence session allows the audience to ask questions in real time, adding to the life-like feel of the exchange. “It’s hard with a typical video conference to achieve what telepresence offers you; you get the real feel and sound with telepresence. You can establish a relationship with someone over telepresence; you feel like you know them,” add Childs.

Increasing Collaboration

The NDU iCollege is currently collaborating frequently with Duke University over Polycom telepresence and the ultimate goal is to engage in collaborative efforts with universities and military organizations around the world. And Dr. Childs only sees the use of the immersive telepresence systems growing. “Over next six months, use of these systems will explode as the faculty gets more experience with them and sees the capabilities.”

Learn More

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