



All facility photos courtesy
of Georgetown Visitation
Preparatory School

Extron AV Upgrade Helps 220-Year-Old Georgetown Visitation Prepare Students for the 2020's and Beyond

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Leonor Ponzio
Director of Educational Technology
Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School

Challenge

Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School, founded in 1799, is a college preparatory school rooted in the Roman Catholic faith and Salesian tradition. Located within the shadow of the Washington Monument in the U.S. capital, the school’s historic campus has a student population of approximately 500 young women in grades 9 through 12.

The school began a three-year project in 2018 to upgrade its classroom AV systems and its 1950’s-era public address and bell systems. The project is equipping every classroom, as well as meeting rooms and seminar spaces, with Extron PlenumVault digital AV systems and VoiceLift Pro voice reinforcement microphone systems. The project also deployed Extron GlobalViewer Campus Communication Suite - GVCCS - providing a state-of-the-art public address and bell management system. Leonor Ponzio, Director of Educational Technology, is handling project planning and coordination. She is assisted with system design and commissioning by resident technical support contractor Colin Zack. System integrator Infiniti Technologies, Columbia, MD is the integrating contractor.



Three-year rollout of PlenumVault AV systems and VoiceLift Pro voice reinforcement microphone systems equips every classroom by Summer 2020. In this image the PlenumVault system is hidden in ceiling just to the left of the round speaker grille while the projector is flanked by two FlatField speakers.



PVT HD RGB wallplate and MLC Plus 100 MediaLink Controller are in every classroom.



VoiceLift Pro adopted for voice reinforcement during classroom instruction, staff meetings, and special events.

Solution

Three-Phase Rollout Paced by Budget

Phase 1 saw the bulk of the AV systems upgrades. The top priority was to replace the 70-year-old public address and bell system. Only one employee knew how to operate and maintain this ancient system. Because the school relies heavily on the PA system to make emergency announcements, replacing the old system with a modern, maintainable system was imperative. GlobalViewer Campus Communication Suite was installed and commissioned to meet this urgent need. With GVCCS, any administrator with access can manage bells and public address announcements over existing network infrastructure.

Phase 1 also outfitted half the existing classrooms with PlenumVault AV systems, augmented with VoiceLift systems. With the remaining Phase 1 funding, the balance of the classrooms received VoiceLift systems only. In this way, the new GVCCS public address and bell system could reach every classroom through modern speakers that came with the PlenumVault and VoiceLift systems, bypassing the legacy PA system's old, barely intelligible speakers.

In 2019, Phase 2 comprised installing complete PlenumVault and VoiceLift systems and GVCCS public address connectivity in all classrooms of two newly constructed buildings. When Phase 3 is completed, each of the classrooms that received VoiceLift systems during Phase 1 will have a PlenumVault System added.

Identical AV Systems in Every Classroom Provide Teachers with a Consistent User Experience

Prior to the upgrade to the PlenumVault AV systems, teachers wishing to incorporate multimedia content into their lessons were often frustrated. According to Leonor Ponzio, "They would bring a laptop into class, but didn't know what cord to connect, nor how to get their material to the projector. Now every room has the same PVT HD RGB wallplate with HDMI and VGA ports and an MLC Plus 100 MediaLink Plus Controller with VGA and HDMI buttons to select between the two. That's a big deal for teachers. They can go to any classroom with their laptop and immediately present their material without losing 20 minutes for setup."

VoiceLift Skeptics Become Believers

Ponzio recalls that when the first set of VoiceLift Pro systems were installed during Phase-1, "there were a lot of raised eyebrows and jokes about karaoke." But as the din from new building construction continued through the school year, teachers in classrooms close to the construction realized that the voice reinforcement provided by the VoiceLift microphones was the only way they and their students could speak and be clearly heard. They used VoiceLift every single day. VoiceLift also found its way into the gymnasium workout room, the dance studio, lecture theaters, and the



Existing audio systems in some venues, such as the dining facility pictured here, were easily integrated with the GVCCS PA and bell system via CC 100C Codecs (inset).



Reliable, easy-to-use Extron classroom AV systems help Georgetown Visitation educate young women to be future leaders.

library. The lecture theaters and library occasionally host staff meetings and in-service seminars. According to Colin Zack, "In the past, these periodic events required hauling-out a bulky live-event speaker system in advance. Now, with VoiceLift, everything's already in place; the presenters just pick-up the mic and start talking."

Existing Audio Systems Integrate with GVCCS

There were places where it made economic sense to keep the existing audio systems. The CC 100C Campus Communication Suite Codec made it simple and economical to merge the legacy audio systems with GVCCS. A case in point is the recently remodeled dining facility. The existing audio distribution equipment and in-ceiling speakers were retained during the remodel. The CC 100C codec decodes GVCCS PA announcements and bells to analog audio that plugs directly into the existing system. According to Zack, "It was great to be able to just plug the codec in and have announcements coming over the existing speakers. We were able to get everything working together on the same system saving time and money in the process."

Result

Leonor Ponzio and Colin Zack measure the success of their AV system upgrade efforts by how seldom their support line telephone rings. As a service organization, they usually heard from users only when things went wrong. According to Zack, prior to the upgrades, 85% of their day was devoted to helping users configure and operate their AV systems, or fixing failed equipment. Those types of calls have slowed to a trickle. Building on this success, Ponzio and Zack look forward to the final installation phase in 2020, giving every teacher at Georgetown Visitation important multimedia tools to help prepare young women to become the leaders of tomorrow.

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