

TRANSFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION

**Purdue University Fort Wayne's
Innovative Classroom Experience**

CREATING A FLEXIBLE HIGHER ED CLASSROOM WITH
THE FORUM COLLABORATION SUITE



CHALLENGE

It's no understatement to say higher education teaching methodologies have monumentally changed over the past few years. At Purdue University Fort Wayne, federal grant funding was used to transform traditional classrooms into new learning environments that accommodate hybrid learning.

The rooms needed to support active learning and mixed-modality instruction by giving instructors the flexibility to implement different teaching styles and engage students more effectively.

SOLUTION

Brian Spaulding, the Associate Director of Technology Spaces, led the project with the goal of enhancing the classroom experience for both in-person and remote students. After exploring various options for furniture and technology solutions, they chose Legrand | AV because of the unique features and customization capabilities of Middle Atlantic's Forum™ Collaboration Suite.

The project involved setting up five classrooms with six Forum tables and stands arranged around the perimeter. Such a setup places each student near a 4K display for more immersive and accessible learning. Remote students kept the benefit of content sharing and interaction with the students in the room.



In an example of working with partners, the team collaborated closely with Legrand | AV representatives who helped with the project kickoff and provided valuable insights, Spaulding said. The university opted for the Forum seated angle tables that taper to ensure everyone at the table is visible to the camera.

The system offers multiple modes to support different teaching styles. Teachers can use it for presentations, student-led sessions, or distance learning with participants joining remotely. The design provides flexibility for teachers to engage students actively and facilitate group work effectively. For instance, in classes requiring group activities, a class of 30 students can divide into teams of five, one team per collaboration suite (or pod), enabling students to collaborate on a shared TV using their local PCs or laptops. A camera mounted on the Forum Display Stand allows absent group members to join virtually, promoting seamless participation.

To ensure smooth operation, the team incorporated Vaddio's Easy IP system into the classrooms. This system includes ceiling microphones, a PTZ camera with 20x zoom, and a mixer. The microphones and the Dante audio networking technology enhance audio quality, while the lecture capture system enables easy audio checks.



"The mics have been awesome," said Spaulding. "This was our first foray into Dante networked audio."

Additionally, the team used the Wiremold InteGreat™ Field Wired AV Table Boxes to provide elegant and convenient connectivity options such as HDMI, Ethernet, and USB for each pod. Under each table, a microcomputer allows easy sharing of content with all the displays in the room.

The project faced some challenges, Spaulding noted. Such as finding suitable rooms that could be disassembled. However, Legrand | AV's solutions and the Forum Collaboration Suite's flexibility and adaptability allowed the team to overcome these challenges effectively.



RESULTS

The rooms were works in progress until May, but even when they weren't fully functional, faculty loved the ability to have students use the integrated technology. The ease of use, improved audio quality, and the ability to switch between different teaching modes received praise from both faculty and visiting Indiana University teachers.

Spaulding wasn't planning on having classes in the rooms this summer, but one faculty member found out they were completed and immediately wanted to move her class. They already have two classes scheduled in one of the rooms for the summer.

Faculty who were using the unfinished rooms are coming back in the fall. Spaulding said they will work with a teacher group to provide the few minutes of training needed to get them up to speed on the new capabilities. One administrator said the rooms "seemed like a miracle."

They are glad to have this additional option available for faculty, but they aren't planning to make it a standard. "These are for the teachers that really want to get into it," Spaulding said.

The upshot of the project was they integrated 20 other rooms for enhanced lecture capture using Vaddio's EasyIP camera systems. Large displays near the cameras on the far end of the room allow the lecturers to read their presentation notes and look like they are speaking directly to the students joining remotely.

The project achieved its goal of transforming traditional classrooms into active learning spaces that support different teaching styles and foster engagement among students. The flexibility, customizability, and audio-visual capabilities of the Legrand | AV solutions played a crucial role in achieving the desired outcomes. The end users' positive reaction and the demand for future bookings demonstrate the success of the project and its impact on the classroom experience at Purdue University Fort Wayne.



*Middle Atlantic's Forum
Collaboration Suite*

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