Southampton Solent University in England is known for its practical engagement with technology and its cutting-edge facilities. The university wanted to enhance the learning environment and provide its 12,500 students with the latest AV equipment in the classroom. This goal also included accommodating a range of teaching styles with user-friendly systems that could be monitored over the university’s network. Campus upgrades in Summer 2011 and Summer 2012 included nine dual projection rooms and three smaller single projection rooms. To meet these needs, the university hired AV integrators Roche AV and GV Multi-Media to design systems using Extron products.

Reliable Classroom AV Systems

The new classroom AV systems give tutors the option to use a laptop, desktop PC, document camera, or DVD/VCR combo player and display the content using one or two projectors. Classroom upgrades incorporated analog and digital formats, taking into consideration a limited budget and feedback from tutors regarding the content typically used in the classrooms. In dual projection rooms, source signals are routed through an Extron MVX Series VGA and Stereo Audio Matrix Switcher so that any choice of inputs can be shown side-by-side using two projectors. In single projection rooms, an Extron SW2 VGA DA2 A switcher routes signals from a document camera and laptop to the projector, while digital video from the PC is sent to the projector using an Extron DVI 201 Twisted Pair Extender.

The switcher’s audio output is routed through an Extron MPA 401 Amplifier to a set of Extron SI 26CT Ceiling Speakers. Some dual projection rooms use an Extron XPA 2003C Three Channel Power Amplifier.

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Amplifier in place of the MPA 401 to provide both program sound and voice reinforcement from one unit. “These amplifiers were ideal because they don’t require external cooling and their energy efficiency qualities help in reducing the carbon footprint of the university,” says Ian Taylor, Classroom Technologist for Southampton Solent University. Compact enclosure sizes facilitate housing the equipment within the lectern for a cleaner installation and additional teaching space.

Easy-to-Use Control
To simplify operation of each system, integrators paired an Extron TLP 700MV TouchLink® Touchpanel with the IPL T SFI244 and IPL T S6 IP Link® Control Processors for dual projection rooms, and an Extron TLP 350MV TouchLink Touchpanel with the IPL 250 IP Link Control Processor for single projection rooms. The user-friendly touchpanels offer a 7” or 3.5” touchscreen, customizable backlit buttons, and a volume knob for easily accessible system functions. As tutors teach in various rooms, they will experience a common AV system control interface on the touchpanels, providing an intuitive, consistent way to control the sources, projectors, and drop-down screens.

One of the TLP 700MV-equipped dual-projection rooms is a training facility that allows staff to better understand how to use the classroom equipment and operate the devices with confidence. “Knowing that the AV system in the training facility matches the newly upgraded teaching spaces, means that I can confidently demonstrate to staff how they operate equipment from the touchpanel,” says Taylor. “It has been very rewarding to see staff leave the sessions more confident, and often it’s the little things that make a big difference.”

AV Resource Management
Extron GlobalViewer® Enterprise, or GVE, is a server-based AV resource management application that enables Southampton Solent University to manage, monitor, and control rooms throughout its buildings over the university’s network. Personnel can set up schedules to power off and power on equipment at specific times throughout the campus, or in individual buildings or rooms. By ensuring the displays and AV sources are powered off at designated times, the scheduling option allows lamps to last longer and helps reduce energy costs.

The university also takes advantage of the software’s capabilities by creating reports and monitoring projector lamp hours, device inactivity, and device disconnection. GVE allows users to create user-defined monitors based on location or device type for a variety of conditions. The university used this capability to create a monitor that triggers a shutdown of the room’s system if the projector powers off after a period of inactivity. This enables support personnel to ensure all equipment in the room’s system stays in sync for the next user.

Valuable Results
The newly installed Extron equipment has proven to be reliable and ideally suited for these teaching areas. Training sessions and Extron support has meant that the staff is better equipped with the skills to maintain the systems and take advantage of the many features. “The rooms are a huge improvement – much better for teaching in general. The Extron system is straightforward and easy to use, which has helped make these rooms more comfortable to teach in,” says Debbie Moores, Senior Lecturer in Visual Communication.