



Industry

Government/Education

Daily Use

- Distance learning
- Internal communications
- Administrative meetings
- Training
- Interviewing
- Remote site communications

Solution

- Polycom® RealPresence™ Experience (RPX™) immersive telepresence solution
- Polycom RMX 2000® real-time media conference platform
- Polycom® Converged Management Application™ (CMA™) solution
- Polycom Video Network Operations Center (VNOC) service

Results and Benefits

- Savings of \$255,000 in first year of operation
- More engaged students in SSCF program
- Ability for students to interact with nationally known speakers
- More effective face-to-face communication with DOD and armed services senior leadership
- Time and cost savings associated with reduced travel

Polycom® Telepresence Helps Defense Acquisition University Extend its Reach

Defense Acquisition University (DAU) educates and certifies acquisition, technology and logistics (ATL) professionals in the Department of Defense (DOD), along with other government agencies and defense-related private industry. DAU students manage acquisition and logistics for all military systems—from surveillance to weapons—and administer contracts worth up to several billion dollars.

With 20 locations throughout the United States, DAU offers formal courses, continuous learning, knowledge sharing assets, and consulting to a Defense Acquisition Workforce of nearly 130,000. Last year, through a combination of classroom, online, and hybrid courses, DAU graduated a record 154,252 students.

In 2007, DAU began deploying a state-of-the-art Polycom Telepresence network to enable a new program to extend its reach. Launched a year earlier at DAU's facility in Huntsville, Alabama, the Senior Service College Fellowship (SSCF) Program prepares experienced civilian ATL professionals for advancement with an education equivalent to similar programs available only to military personnel. SSCF is based on the Harvard Case Method, which uses real-life scenarios to teach concepts and best practices.

With their eye on expansion, DAU officials used early-generation video teleconferencing (VTC) systems combined with online tools such as GoToMeeting to bring the SSCF curriculum to fellows in DAU locations such as Detroit, Michigan.

"It was, to put it nicely, a disaster," recalls David Newberry, head of DAU's SSCF program. "We couldn't keep in synch. We had fellows ready to talk about their cases, but we couldn't connect to the facilitator in Fort Belvoir."

The problem was a show-stopper. "In this course, you can cover three cases a day for nine weeks, says Newberry. "Critical thinking is a big part of this program, so continuity is vital. Without it, you lose the quality of learning that you need."

"We started out with four sites connected via ISDN, but the slow video frame rate created jitter and lag time that was unacceptable," says James McCullough, dean of DAU's South Region. "When you're trying to keep fellows active for six hours in this environment, they become weary. It affects their ability to engage."

Connecting with Fellows

Determined to improve on its remote teaching network, DAU sought out a state-of-the-art telepresence environment. An extensive competitive evaluation studied solutions from several

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vendors. “We wanted to create an environment where participants had the sense they were truly involved with one another,” says Dave Scibetta, DAU’s director of operations.

DAU had three main selection criteria: a competitive price; a quality experience featuring high-definition (HD) video, audio and content with minimal lag time; and an open architecture for easy future expansion. “After weighing these factors, we felt Polycom gave us the best option,” says Scibetta.

Although the initial goal was to link four DAU locations with Polycom telepresence, that number quickly grew. Today, DAU is in the process of installing 10 Polycom® RealPresence™ Experience (RPX™) immersive telepresence suites. DAU has already outfitted three locations—Huntsville, Fort Belvoir, Virginia, and Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland. The university will deploy the rest as facilities are upgraded and expanded.

Achieving an ‘Across the Table’ Experience

With a cinematic, 16-foot video wall and specially designed conference environment, the Polycom solution virtually places all participants “across the table” from each other.

“With Polycom Telepresence, you become one with your environment,” says McCullough. “In about two to three minutes, you forget you’re separated from other participants.”

For DAU, the advantages are many. “Compared to standard VTC, there’s a stark difference in the quality of learning with telepresence,” says Newberry. “And it allows us to bring nationally known speakers to the fellows, without the need for travel.”

It helps, says Newberry, that “the simplicity of operation is incredibly good.” DAU relies on Polycom’s Video Network Operations Center (VNOC) to handle all scheduling, remote monitoring, fault management and monthly reporting for all suites.

To expand its video network capabilities and simplify management, DAU is outfitting its telepresence network with the Polycom RMX 2000 real-time media conference platform and the Polycom® Converged Management Application™ (CMA™).

Saving Time and Money

The Polycom environments also enrich communications during regular leadership meetings among DAU deans and directors. “The time and travel savings are significant,” says Newberry.

“I can have the lieutenant general in charge of all Army acquisitions sitting in front of me and anyone else he needs to speak with. And he won’t have to get on a plane and fly to Huntsville or drive up to Aberdeen Proving Ground.”

Back when he first proposed the telepresence network to DAU leadership, McCullough predicted a rapid return on the university’s investment. “In the first year, and with just two Polycom Telepresence solutions in place, we saved \$255,000,” he says.

McCullough says DAU is eyeing even more uses for Polycom telepresence. He already relies on it for executive coaching, and wants to leverage it for recruiting. The university also is considering expanding its network to Orlando, Fla., to link DAU sites with the learning lab of a major private industry partner.

McCullough sees applications for the technology stretching to logistical support for overseas military and medical training.

“There are lots of uses for this technology,” he says. “We just haven’t discovered them all yet.”

About Polycom

Polycom is the global leader in standards-based unified communications (UC) solutions for telepresence, video, and voice powered by the Polycom® RealPresence™ Platform. The RealPresence Platform interoperates with the broadest range of business, mobile, and social applications and devices. More than 400,000 organizations trust Polycom solutions to collaborate and meet face-to-face from any location for more productive and effective engagement with colleagues, partners, customers, and prospects. Polycom, together with its broad partner ecosystem, provides customers with the best TCO, scalability, and security—on-premises, hosted, or cloud delivered.

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