PROJECTING THE RIGHT IMAGE

DIGITAL SIGNING HELPS DEPAUL UNIVERSITY WELCOME CENTER MAKE ASTRONG FIRST IMPRESSION.

by Wendy Ellis

University admissions can be as competitive as a Blue Demons playoff game. Nobody knows that better than DePaul University in Chicago. If prospective students are going to put DePaul at the top of their list, they need to know just what this prestigious university has to offer. Whether it's championship basketball or cutting edge technology,

designing the center. "We said, 'Make it as stunning and memorable for visitors as we can possibly make it,'" says Jon Boeckenstedt, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Policy and Planning. "We wanted the ability to do a lot of interesting multi-media and interactive presentations, with information flowing at people from different angles and different perspectives."

SHOWING OFF

That they achieved, especially in the 120-seat auditorium at the heart of the center. Virtually every prospective student and parent starts their visit there with a 30-minute video and PowerPoint presentation about the university, "Who we are, what we stand for, and how we're different," says Boeckenstedt. "But we've also used it for other things, like seminars for college and university people who are all amazed when they walk in there. They can't believe they're in a university welcome center. Our intent was to make them a little jealous."

That envy stems largely from the presence of a Sharp

DePaul's new Welcome Center lets end-users share multi-media and interactive presentations.

info
DEPAUL UNIVERSITY
depaul.edu
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DePaul can now show it off at its new Welcome Center.

Open only since the fall of 2009, the university specified outcomes, not specifics, when

3-chip DLP XG-P560W high definition projector, a 16-foot wall screen and surround sound audio system. The projector's 3-chip DLP technology with 5200 Lumens and HD compatible WXGA resolution offers clarity and

Technology helps DePaul distinguish itself as a future-forward institution.

widescreen color imagery that can't help but impress. The dual lamp system adds extra brightness and ensures the projector will keep operating at critical moments, even if one lamp burns out. The projector can be monitored remotely for maintenance and security via LAN and handles a wide variety of source materials, even Blue-ray discs.

"I knew we had a winner when the IT guys hooking up the system were talking about watching the *Avatar* trailer with the surround sound on," says Boeckenstedt. "They thought it was the coolest thing ever." The auditorium's acoustics are so good you can stand at the front and hear someone whispering at the back. "We haven't caught up to the capabilities of the room yet. We're still working on designing something to present to people that is as big and as bold and as exciting as that room gives us the opportunity to be."

THE BIG PICTURE

Several 65-inch Sharp LCD Displays are in use throughout the center, one above the reception desk displays the names of the day's visitors; another is used by DePaul Alumni in the adjacent alumni center, and a third provides high-definition video to a small conference room enclosed behind windows etched with DePaul logos.

"Because we have two campuses, we frequently video conference or do Webinars to save travel time," says Boeckenstedt. "People assemble in that room, and if I'm doing data analysis, we display it on that screen from my desktop. It saves me going up to Lincoln Park or the whole admissions staff coming downtown."

The Sharp displays also hold promise for the future. Gregg Barker, Senior AV Technician at DePaul, says they hope to expand their use of digital signage soon. "It's the easiest way to reach students on the move," says Barker. "There's a little of it on campus now, but more and more we're headed that way."

DePaul takes great pride in the fact that 100 percent of classrooms are equipped with AV technology. A new classroom at the Welcome Center is no exception. A ceiling-mounted Sharp XG-PH70X installation grade projector with wall screen and fully AV equipped podium are the same tools found across campus. "We worked really hard at standardization," says Barker, who is tasked with design and implementation of DePaul's audio visual technology. "We saw down the road that an equipped classroom with projector and computer is now the minimum requirement. We kind of got the jump on everybody."

Outside the auditoriums and conference rooms there are things to keep even the casual visitors interested. Stand at the back wall and you will see hundreds of small beechwood squares bearing painted campus images. Stand farther back and they become a single image, that of DePaul's logo, the Tree of Wisdom.

It was equally important to bring the university's Vincentian history to life in a modern world. Visitors waiting in the center's common area have much to look at: black and white photographs of the places that St. Vincent de Paul worked and lived, framed quotes and images of his vestments and personal items. "They add that spirit of our heritage, history and mission," says Boeckenstedt. "How do you take someone from the 1500s or 1600s and make him modern? You make it stylistic and artistic and beautiful, and it blends in seamlessly with the rest of the presentation."

Finally, the faces of DePaul stu-

dents peer out from the walls of the center, printed right on the custom designed wallpaper. Boeckenstedt likes the options this creates. "Every couple years we can change the wallpaper and put up new images. Like when we win the NCAA tournament we can put up a picture of them cutting down the nets!"

THE VALUE OF A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION

No one argues with the importance of making a good first impression, and in today's university admissions world, technology is a large part of that.

"We're very proud of how pervasive technology is at DePaul and how we use it," says Boeckenstedt. "When I started college it was a big thing to have a phone in every dorm room. Now we're talking about putting our campus tours on iPhone apps. Students just expect to be connected and have technology available. To have an up-to-date, modern, impressive center on the front end of things is consistent with our vision and image."

Wendy Ellis is a freelance writer with extensive experience in the AV and broadcast industries.

KEY ELEMENTS ///
FOR THE END USER

NETWORK IMPACT
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ROI
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VERSATILITY
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—*Jon Boeckenstedt, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Policy and Planning*