

## CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

# Charles Sturt University

Connecting students, faculty and staff across regional Australia to engage with learning and teaching, enabling users to work from anywhere

### At a glance

- Extended course offerings and Interactive Video Teaching to more students and several campuses across New South Wales
- Enabled students to access lecture videos on demand with capture and recording functionality
- Achieved operational and workflow efficiencies from more frequent communication, and time and cost savings from reduced travel

### Featured products

- Polycom® RealPresence® Group Series
- Polycom® VVX® 400 Series VoIP phones
- Polycom® RealPresence® Access Director™
- Polycom® RealPresence® Media Suite



Vast distances in Australia have often meant that accessibility to education, especially in remote areas, can often be challenging. However, collaboration technology and blended learning methods are providing new opportunities for students to participate in classes that may otherwise have required them to leave their home towns or workplaces, particularly in regional areas.

Online education has been given new meaning at Charles Sturt University (CSU), a leading tertiary education provider in New South Wales, Australia with multiple campuses in Albury-Wodonga, Bathurst, Orange, Dubbo, Goulburn, Homebush, Manly, Port Macquarie and Wagga Wagga—among several other locations. The university's Interactive Virtual Teaching (IVT) program has extended live lectures and enabled students from any of these locations to not only enroll in new courses, but also actively participate in classroom discussions and collaborate face-to-face with lecturers via video.

CSU continues to be strongly focused on providing improved access to education in regional areas and optimising faculty resources to serve their people and communities better. What helps CSU's IVT program stand out from traditional online learning is the live two-way interaction between students and lecturers,

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Brian Roberson, Director, Infrastructure and Client Services, Charles Sturt University

making this method of learning more inclusive and personal. Through technology, students are no longer merely receiving information, but actively participating and collaborating with their peers and lecturers, improving the learning process and experience across large distances.

### One Lecture, Many Locations

With overarching objectives to provide rich educational experiences and improve administrative workflows, CSU looked for technology solutions that would ensure a high-quality audio, video and content-sharing experience between two or more endpoints. Most importantly, any deployment would have to enable integration between those locations and interoperability with existing technology.

Approximately 40 IVT rooms equipped with Polycom video endpoints have been transformed into “Connected Classrooms”—interactive teaching spaces where lectures are conducted across multiple campuses at once. “Connected Classrooms are where we have scheduled lectures for our students physically on campus, while delivering the lesson virtually to students at other campuses at the same time,” explains Brian Roberson, Director, Infrastructure and Client Services at CSU. “For example, a lecturer may be located at the campus in Wagga Wagga, but would also connect to an IVT room in Bathurst and deliver that same lesson virtually. This can be across two or more campuses, or multiple Polycom endpoints. Integration with our Pexip meeting solution has also enabled students to join those classes via their browser or mobile from the comfort of their home or any remote location.” Document and content sharing are also an important aspect of all IVT lectures, and technology has helped this take place seamlessly between endpoints.

Learning via video conferencing is such an integral part of the culture at CSU that all enrolled students and staff members are provided with their own virtual meeting room (VMR) and dial-in code. “We have streamlined this process allowing people to simply join a conference via a browser. While scheduled conferences are commonplace in our teaching ecosystem,

ad hoc conferences can occur at any time from any device anywhere in the world,” says Roberson. He points out that individual VMRs have also meant that when CSU students are on work placement or in full-time work, they can remain in close contact with their colleagues and lecturers using their personal VMRs. They can remain at home, still enroll in a CSU course of their choice and study online with CSU, without distance being a limiting factor to further their education.

Recorded lectures also form a crucial part of the university’s course offering to students. “Our library of video recordings is very well received and consumed, particularly during exam time or to catch up on a missed lecture,” Roberson says.

### Improving Operational Efficiencies and Collaboration with Guest Experts

At CSU, collaboration in education goes beyond the university’s students and faculty and is a valuable tool for external outreach with remote experts and other institutions.

The School of Dentistry & Health Sciences is one such example of how the university’s technology is regularly used to bring in healthcare experts from beyond the campus to enrich learning and coursework. “CSU has a very well-established dental practice—two schools in Wagga Wagga and Orange and several clinics. We regularly bring in guest lecturers and dental specialists from hospitals such as Westmead via video conference to provide additional expertise and practical application,” Roberson explains. “What’s more, a number of researchers within our institution regularly collaborate via video with peer groups, and our Human Resources teams use the technology extensively for interviews and candidate inductions.”

But it’s not just the faculty and students experiencing the benefits of collaboration, CSU’s administrative functions are among the most prolific users of video technology, improving communication and workflows and significantly saving time and money. “Our staff is located at multiple campuses, and historically to meet face-to-face, we had to travel between locations. As you can imagine, distances are vast—Wagga

Wagga to Bathurst, for example, can take up to four hours commute time. Add to that the fuel bills, CO2 emissions and lost time in productivity—this was simply not efficient on many levels. Today, the number of video conferences undertaken on a daily and monthly basis between departments is immense. We average over 1,700 audio and video conferences per week!” He adds that in a 12-month period, over 35,000 video conferencing hours are clocked up, of which nearly 8,000 are spent on interactive teaching.

#### An Evolving and Flexible Collaboration Environment

As a long-term Polycom customer, CSU’s unified communications environment has progressed through many generations of Polycom endpoints and collaboration technology. Among the solutions which make up the university’s collaboration setup are around 125 Polycom RealPresence Group Series video endpoints in the 40 IVT rooms and 85 admin conference rooms, RealPresence Media Suite for recording and archiving of video content, Polycom VVX 400 Series VoIP desk phones in office and administrative function areas, and RealPresence Access Director for secure firewall traversal beyond the university’s networks.

A crucial consideration for any technology implementation is encouraging wide adoption and usage among users. In an education environment, it is particularly important for users to not just know how to use the technology, but to apply it within a learning environment towards innovative pedagogy.

“For our faculty and students, using video conferencing has really become as simple as making a phone call,” says Roberson. “Professional development for academics is conducted twice annually, particularly in how to interact or engage with online students and how to effectively operate video-enabled teaching spaces. The touch panel user interface in each of the rooms is simple to use and consistent across all spaces, making the process as seamless as possible.”

#### The Future of Connected Learning

With the success of stronger collaboration, CSU’s technology roadmap for education delivery is one that remains in growth. “Perhaps in 10 years’ time, there may not be physical classrooms any more, but a stronger focus on virtual learning to enable more students to join courses from their location of choice,” says Roberson.

He continues, “Technology is driving change and users’ adoption of technology is dictating different ways of learning. Regardless of the technology challenges and opportunities, as a university, we will endeavour to meet the requirements which the market demands and what students are looking for.”

## About Polycom

Polycom helps organizations unleash the power of human collaboration. More than 400,000 companies and institutions worldwide defy distance with video, voice and content solutions from Polycom. Polycom and its global partner ecosystem provide flexible collaboration solutions for any environment that deliver the best user experience and unmatched investment protection.

Polycom, Inc.  
1.800.POLYCOM  
[www.polycom.com](http://www.polycom.com)

Polycom Asia Pacific Pte Ltd  
+65 6389 9200  
[www.polycom.com.sg](http://www.polycom.com.sg)

Polycom EMEA  
+44 (0)1753 723282  
[www.polycom.co.uk](http://www.polycom.co.uk)

