

Field Focus

Sony Professional Products in Action

Sony IPELA Technology Provides Alternate Communications Route for Rutgers University

PCS-TL50 Videoconferencing System Gives Faculty and Administrators an Easy Detour toward "Face-to-Face" Visual Interaction

With major construction on the key connecting road between Rutgers University's largest campus and New Jersey interstates threatening to disrupt travel and cause commuting headaches this summer, Sony's IPELA® line of Internet protocol (IP)-based communications technology is being used to help the school's faculty and staff stay out of traffic jams, while staying in touch remotely.

Sony's PCS-TL50 IP-based desktop videoconferencing units are enabling the institution's more than two dozen deans scattered across five campuses to conduct regular meetings and ad-hoc communications.

Dr. Raphael J. Caprio, vice president for Continuous Education and Outreach, Rutgers University, began planning the institution's videoconferencing response to this transportation challenge a year ago. With the roadway project expected to take more than three years to complete, the disruption could cause a considerable increase in operating costs at the state school as well as degrade campus life and work conditions.

"In the past, driving to and from in-person meetings has been the first, preferred method for our deans to gather together, and changing such embedded habits is difficult," said Caprio. "Fortunately, advances in videoconferencing technology have come along at this crucial moment. Being able to connect 'face-to-face' from your desktop with the ease of operating a telephone beats sitting in the car for endless hours."

As Caprio began investigating the possibilities for videoconfer-



encing, he relied upon a wealth of experience with the technology from his work with distance learning. He notes that classroom and earlier room-based communication systems introduced a level of formality that ran counter to the kind of collegial connections he wished to foster. In the past, nothing effectively bridged the gap between using the telephone and attending in-person meetings.

Recently, the rise of IP-based communications including e-mail and instant messaging has created new modes for connecting organizations and individuals. Now, Sony's IPELA line of desktop videoconferencing solutions extends and enhances this capability to achieve an effective alternate to time lost to travel for meetings.

"The key is bringing videoconferencing to the desktop with simplicity of operation," said Caprio. "In the past, videoconferencing rooms have gone underutilized even if they happen to be located next door to you. But desktop videoconferencing is instantly available just like the phone. It's also gotten so simple that if you can handle a personal digital assistant, text messaging or TV remote, you're capable of making a video call."

Working with Tele-Measurements, a New Jersey-based videoconferencing value added reseller, Caprio conducted an extensive search of existing IP-based systems. According to Tele-Measurements, Caprio chose the Sony IPELA PCS-TL50 system due to its superior performance, robust image resolution and sound quality scalable to 2 Mbps bandwidth, in addition to intuitive, easy operation.



According to the Rutgers team, the unit's 6 MCU is more than enough to connect the various points in the school's network. Beyond these primary capabilities, the PCS-TL50 adds multi-function value to the desktop. Since other standalone systems are dedicated to a single function, the equipment goes unused when not in operation. Caprio saw that the PCS-TL50's spacious 20-inch (viewable area, measured diagonally) LCD monitor could serve double-duty as a computer monitor, extending value for the technology investment.

As videoconference-connected deans at Rutgers adopt this new mode of communications, Caprio anticipates advantages throughout the organization.

"Adding desktop videoconferencing into our communications mix reduces our reliance on in-person meetings, but the benefits go beyond just travel time saved," said Caprio. "It reduces stress and increases productivity, improving the quality of our work experience."

