

## Nova Scotia Community College is Realizing its Mission with Polycom Telepresence

### Industry

Education

### Daily use

- Distance learning
- Administrative meetings
- Educational events
- Access to experts

### Solution

- 12 Polycom® HDX® 9000 room telepresence systems
- 6 Polycom® HDX® 4000 personal telepresence systems
- Polycom® RealPresence® Collaboration Server 2000 real-time media conference platform
- Polycom® RSS™ 2000 recording and streaming server
- Polycom® Converged Management Application™ (CMA®) and 200 Polycom® CMA® Desktop licenses
- Polycom Professional Services deployment assistance

### Results and benefits

- 13 courses delivered to students at multiple campuses, totaling 500 hours of video a month
- Ability to offer specialized classes to students at campuses lacking instructors qualified in that subject
- Full enrollment for classes that would otherwise had been cancelled due to low enrollment
- Ability to host guest speakers and educational events



More than 25,000 Canadians are building new futures at Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC), whose five academic schools offer more than 100 programs through a network of 13 campuses and six community learning centers.

Its mission—to build the province’s economy and quality of life through education and innovation—isn’t just standard community college boilerplate. One look at NSCC’s strategic use of video communications and those words come to life.

With help from Polycom, NSCC is helping its students overcome the once immutable boundaries of time and distance to pursue the kind of education that transforms lives and communities.

NSCC uses Polycom telepresence and infrastructure solutions to maximize the reach of its teaching resources across a peninsula that takes more than eight hours to traverse by car. As a result, students throughout the system can take courses that otherwise couldn’t be offered locally, and a single instructor can, without ever leaving his or her home campus, interact face to face with students who live hours away.

NSCC began using video communications in 2002, just a few years after several independently operating training and vocational institutes were joined to form a single, province-wide community college system. “Video conferencing was part of our effort to make the new college system work,” says Donnie MacNeil, information technology manager at NSCC, which first used video for administrative and planning meetings. “Some of our campuses are six hours apart. That meant we were spending a lot of money to pull people together just for meetings.”

“Online learning has its place, but it can’t replace the structure and engagement of face-to-face, classroom learning. That’s what Polycom gives us. It’s a fabulous system.”

Jim Bate, Academic Chair for the Schools of Business and Applied Arts and New Media

Exposure to video conferencing led some deans and academic chairs to consider broader uses for the Polycom systems. “We can’t offer a full complement of courses at every campus; it’s just cost-prohibitive,” says MacNeil. “Then people started using the Polycom equipment and recognized its potential as a platform for teaching throughout the NSCC system. That’s when it really took off.”

In 2008, NSCC committed to bringing a high definition (HD) distance learning experience to as many students as possible. The result is a growing network of Collaborative Learning Spaces built around the Polycom® HDX® 9000 room telepresence systems, smart whiteboards, HD document cameras, amplified sound, and built-in audio systems. A half-dozen Polycom® HDX® 4000 systems now sit on senior faculty and administrators’ desks. “After seeing the HD video in the new Polycom systems, everyone asked for HD on their desks,” MacNeil says. Those, along with an HDX 9000 system that anchors a learning theater, were acquired through Bell Aliant, an NSCC partner and Polycom reseller, and installed with help from Polycom Professional Services.

### Expanding options with telepresence

Eleven such centers are currently in place—three of them at NSCC campuses in Halifax and the rest distributed throughout the province. The facilities enable NSCC to deliver 13 courses via telepresence, which amounts to 500 hours of video conferencing every week.

The benefits are obvious to faculty and students alike. “It’s hard to justify hiring an instructor to teach five students,” says MacNeil. “But if you have five in Sydney, five in Halifax, five in Stellarton and a few more in Yarmouth, then you have critical mass.”

Just ask Marc Simard, a faculty member in the Tourism Management program. “We couldn’t offer our business ethics course without Polycom,” he says. “We had just eight students signed up here at Halifax, and we require 12 to justify a class. But with Polycom giving us access to other campuses, I’m all booked up.”

“That’s the ultimate goal of the collaborative learning spaces,” says MacNeil. “Polycom lets us offer more electives to more students. It gives us options we never had before.”

In 2008 at the Pictou Campus, instructors in the School of Business began using Pictou’s Collaborative Learning Center to teach marketing to two other campuses. Before long, two accounting classes were added. “Our faculty just dove right in,” recalls Jim Bate, a business faculty member there. “Those classes filled the whole day, every day.”

So popular was the telepresence platform that Pictou requested—and secured—a second one. “Now we’re not only teaching students at other campuses, but we’re also receiving instruction from other campuses. Polycom enables us to deliver by distance. Online learning has its place, but it can’t replace the structure and engagement of face-to-face, classroom learning. That’s what Polycom gives us. It’s a fabulous system.”

NSCC is also making a name for itself by hosting events through its Polycom network. Every Monday, for instance, the Tourism Management program features a guest speaker who represents a segment of the tourism industry. And recently, NSCC ended up hosting a Halifax hotel’s video conferencing event on its own bridge. The event was so successful that it inspired Dr. Joan McArthur-Blair, NSCC’s president, to build additional events around Polycom telepresence, including a conference on the future of education.

“Using Polycom telepresence to extend our reach—not just throughout the NSCC system but well beyond its borders—fits beautifully with our mission,” says Dr. McArthur-Blair. “For us, Polycom telepresence is where education and innovation meet.”

### Relying on a world-class infrastructure

That belief is a testament not only to NSCC’s vision for what’s possible, but also to the video communications infrastructure NSCC has built using Polycom solutions. To simplify multiparty conferencing, MacNeil’s staff has installed a Polycom® RealPresence® Collaboration Server conference platform,

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Dr. Joan McArthur-Blair, President, Nova Scotia Community College

while a Polycom® RSS™ server lets NSCC record, stream, and archive lectures and events. Scheduling video conferences across the NSCC system is easier with the Polycom® ReadManager® system.

Meanwhile, the Polycom® Converged Management Application™ (CMA®) solution allows NSCC to manage telepresence, video conferencing, desktop PC, and multipoint video resources from

one central console. And with 200 licenses of the Polycom® CMA® Desktop solution, the college can start extending its video network to more faculty and to students in rural and remote locations.

Perhaps that’s what NSCC means by education and innovation. “To our students, Polycom is just a classroom,” says Simard. “That makes it a success.”

### About Polycom

Polycom is the global leader in open standards-based unified communications and collaboration (UC&C) solutions for voice and video collaboration, trusted by more than 415,000 customers around the world. Polycom solutions are powered by the Polycom® RealPresence® Platform, comprehensive software infrastructure and rich APIs that interoperate with the broadest set of communication, business, mobile and cloud applications and devices to deliver secure face-to-face video collaboration in any environment.

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