



New England School of Communications Making the grade with Grass Valley's Karrera



CUSTOMER

New England School of Communications (NESCom), US
www.nescom.edu

Based in Bangor, ME, NESCom offers Bachelor of Science degrees in Communications Technology, Media Studies, and Entertainment Production.

CHALLENGE

The need for a high-end video production switcher for its mobile production truck that offers a simple interface and quick learning curve to ready students for real-world applications

SOLUTION

Karrera Video Production Center

BENEFIT

The ability for students to learn basic, yet important, functions such as quick transitions within a short time frame in order to prepare them for careers in broadcasting and media production

Background

From its roots as the New England School of Broadcasting (NESB), founded in 1981 in downtown Bangor, ME, the New England School of Communications (NESCom) moved to a facility on the campus of Husson College in 1985 and continued to grow by providing housing, dining, a gymnasium and other campus amenities.

In 1997, NESCom merged with Husson College and became a wholly owned subsidiary. In 2001, a new Communication Center was established for the school with a new wing added in 2004. In 2008 Husson College became the 140 acre Husson University. In the fall of 2014, NESCom will be integrated into the University as part of its portfolio of academic programs.

Today, if you're a student at NESCom, chances are you know your way around the art and technology of production and editing. This small college situated in leafy New England offers Bachelor of Science degrees in three areas: Communications Technology, Entertainment Production and Media Studies. Within these curriculums, students can specialize in a variety of concentrations such as audio engineering, live sound technology, video production, web media, entertainment production, journalism, marketing communications, radio broadcasting and sports journalism.

"At NESCom, we strive to give our students not only the critical knowledge but the technical skills they will need to flourish in their chosen professions," said Rodney Verrill, the school's Executive Director of Communications Technology Programs. "We want our graduates to be 'hired this morning, productive this afternoon'. Our programs are designed to drive passion and fuel creativity in students, all in an intimate, hands-on environment with the most cutting-edge technologies in place."

And in 3, 2, 1...

The intimate and hands-on settings Verrill refers to are the school's on-site video production facilities. They include a multi-purpose television studio, several post-production suites and an editing lab. The school works closely with major technology suppliers in the industry who helped to outfit these facilities, including Audio-Video Corporation, a reseller for Grass Valley. "We've developed close and trusted relationships with major manufacturers and suppliers in the industry. This has definitely helped us keep our gear on the leading edge," said Verrill.

Aside from its in-house production facilities, NESCom also owns a 32-foot mobile production truck that allows students to get first-hand experience in the growing field of remote broadcasting. The mobile truck — aptly named NESCom Mobile Productions — encompasses the major components of the broadcast production process including video production control, replay and camera operations and audio broadcast control into a 4-compartment mobile truck. According to Verrill, the mobile truck came as a natural extension to the school's curriculum and serves as the ideal setting for students to prepare themselves for a career in remote broadcasting. "It's a really beautiful, cutting-edge setup, and we have our technology partners to thank for that," he noted.

The mobile truck is used for a variety of curriculum-based projects such as newscasts, concerts, debates, and sporting events including football, basketball, swimming, lacrosse, baseball and soccer. NESCom also uses the mobile truck in partnership with local network affiliates for a late-night comedy show, a football homecoming game, sporting events and other varietal human-interest programming.

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Rodney Verrill, Executive Director of Communications Technology Programs, New England School of Communications



“Our mobile truck definitely gets a workout,” said Verrill. “It’s right in line with our teaching philosophy which is to emulate the real world environment as closely as possible. Partnering with experts like Grass Valley has enabled us to do that because the company’s technologies, especially its broadcast switchers, are used all around the world in various broadcast and production environments.”

Verrill’s relationship with Grass Valley began back in 2006, when NESCom first installed a Kayak SD switcher into its mobile production truck. “We have a longstanding relationship with Grass Valley. They have always provided top-notch customer service and of course we absolutely loved the Kayak, so in 2012 we upgraded to the HD version, which was a great launching point into the world of HD. So it was no coincidence that we went back to Grass Valley when we decided it was time for our students to start using Karrera—mainly because it’s so widely deployed in the mobile production market. We wanted them to get their hands dirty with a real-world switcher system,” he explained.

Solution

The Karrera Video Production Center is a software-based, modular switcher with an intuitive control panel and a touchscreen side panel, which Verrill said are extremely easy for students to master. The Karrera’s size is ideally suited to mobile production trucks without compromising on power or quality.

“We chose the Karrera for many reasons over the competition, not the least of which is its power and compact size. We love that we get the full functionality of a large system with a mid-range switcher. Karrera gives our students a realistic understanding of the demands of working in the field of remote broadcasting. It offers the features they need to accomplish complex levels of productions, which is truly preparing students with the skills they need to enter the workforce.”

NESCom’s mobile truck uses the Karrera in conjunction with the Concerto routing switcher and the Encore facility control system. The entire system gives students great flexibility and versatility.

“Broadcast events are time sensitive and require products that are reliable and have a high degree of up time. Karrera aligns perfectly with this notion. We also love that it easily interfaces with many other leading manufacturers’ products, which is important as our industry continues to advance as it’s tough to keep students up to speed on the latest range of equipment in the broadcast industry. But with Karrera, we never have to worry about that.”

Benefits

One of the most powerful aspects of Karrera is its ability for student operators to quickly learn the basics of production switching. “It’s vital that our students learn on the same equipment that they’ll encounter in the professional world, so that they have a working knowledge the minute they step inside a facility.”

It’s NESCom’s commitment to professional training that helps to prepare their students for careers in broadcasting and media production.



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