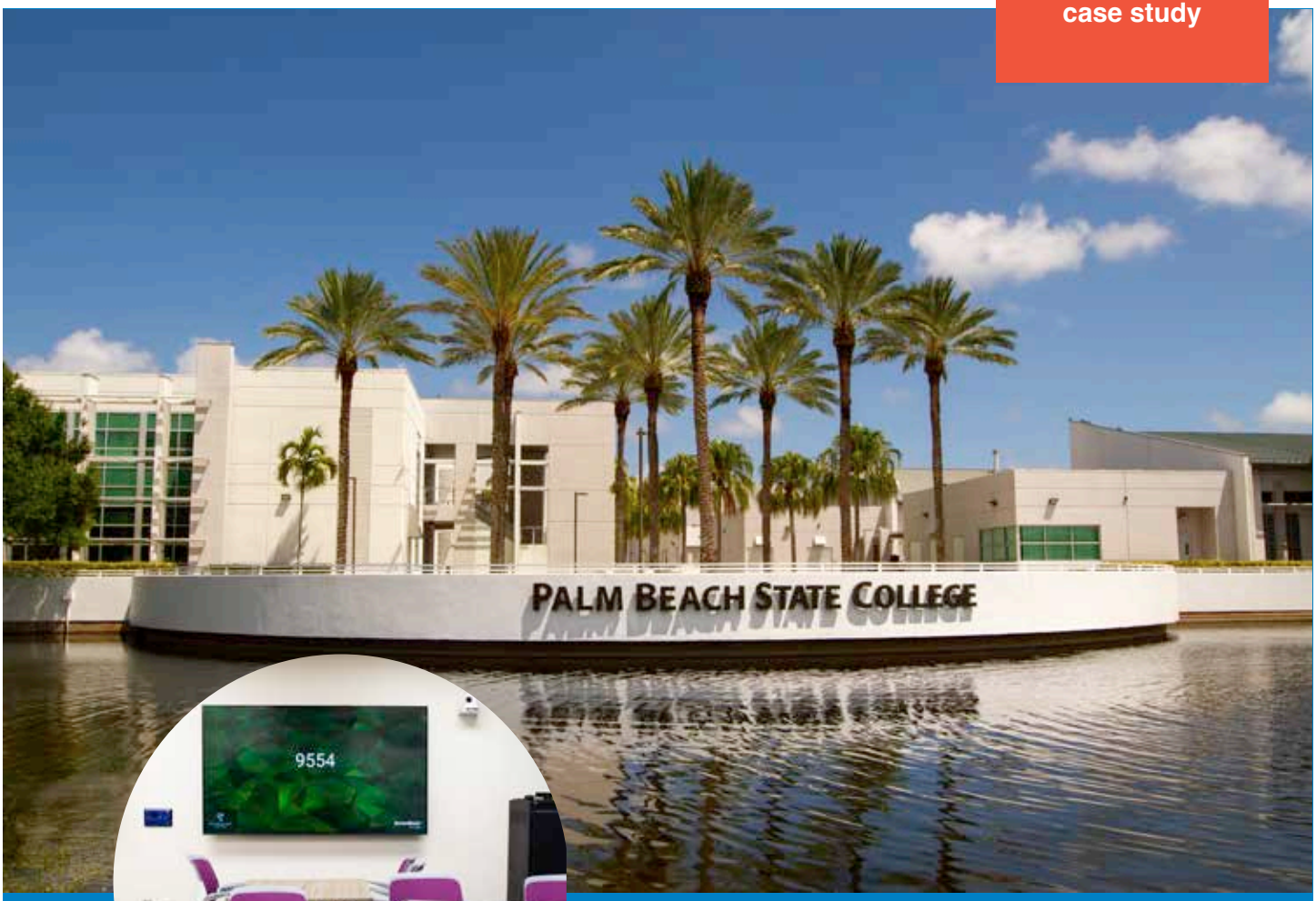
case study



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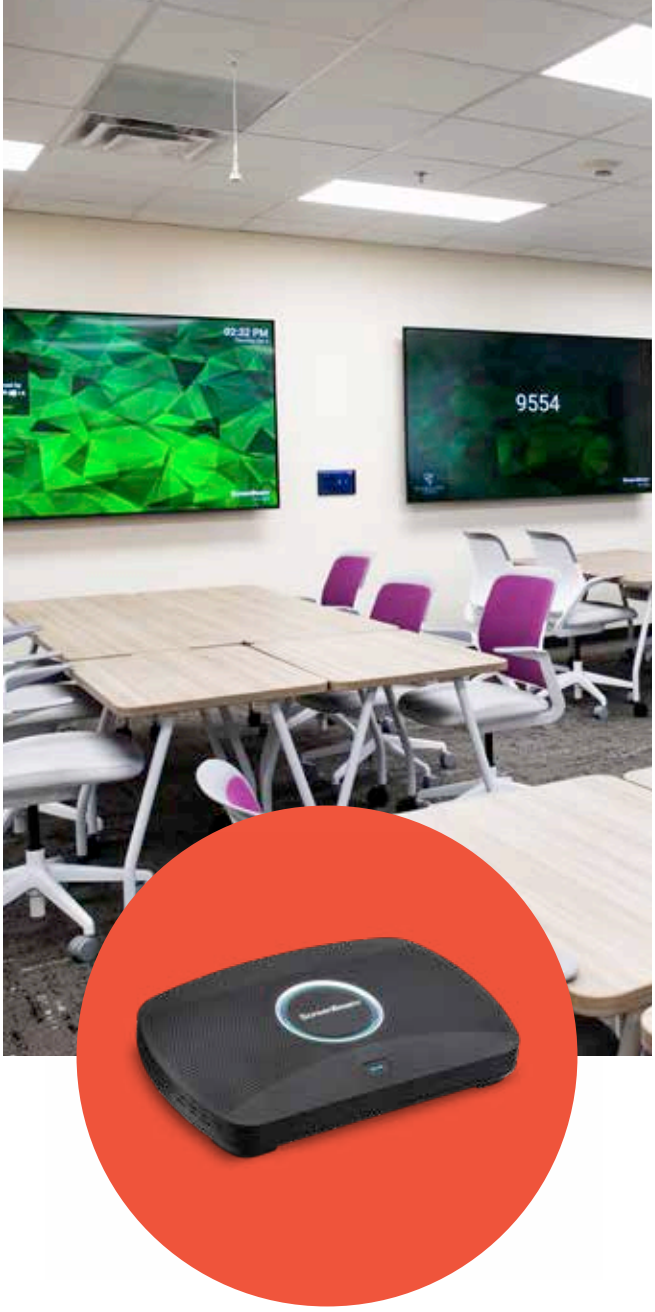
Building a Hybrid Future

One college's quest for secure active-learning at scale

Prepared by Wainhouse for

ScreenBeam®



Next Generation Collaboration

As organizations, universities, and colleges across the globe transition back to in-person activities, IT teams are tasked with deploying technology that provides equity while maintaining continuity. This is no easy task as disparate personal software tools adopted over the last two years are being used in classrooms and lecture halls, most of which don't meet the modern requirements for connectivity, content sharing, and collaboration capabilities for presenters and attendees. To address these new in-room requirements while preparing for the uncertainty of tomorrow, institutions are undertaking a refresh of in-room technology to enable great experiences regardless of location.

To better understand the challenges IT teams are facing, we recently sat down with the decision makers at Palm Beach State College to understand the selection process and success metrics behind hybrid active-learning environments. The college, located in Palm Beach County, Florida, features five campuses with numerous lecture halls and classroom buildings, plus PBSC Online, all servicing a large commuter population. With a long-term goal to enable all rooms with hybrid learning functionality, the team at Palm Beach State College has deployed almost two hundred **ScreenBeam 1100P** devices for wireless casting and collaboration.

Considerations for Success

Palm Beach State College's Director of Client Support Services, David Edris, Ph.D., started our conversation by sharing the evolution of content sharing across the college. His account starts prior to the pandemic, when the college didn't have a universal wireless casting or collaboration solution. Professors and lecturers were using HDMI cables to connect to a display in the room, and while there was some demand for better casting functionality, it wasn't considered top-of-mind.

Around the time of the pandemic, the college started testing hybrid learning solutions to solve remote learning challenges. According to both Dr. Edris and his colleague, Control Systems Programmer Jhanak Thapaliya, through on-campus testing, security and management at scale became primary considerations in the decision-making process.

"You don't want someone not in the classroom connecting to the display and sharing inappropriate content, so security was a top concern."

Director of Client Support Services
Dr. David Edris
Palm Beach State College

While exploring a variety of approaches, the college learned how crucial it is to require **PIN authentication for connecting** to in-room displays for content sharing. If a display can be identified and accessed by anyone on the same network, it increases the propensity for pranks and hijacking. In addition, this approach to content sharing reduces accountability, as the connected user doesn't need to be in the room. In addition to PIN authentication, testing also surfaced an in-room requirement for multi-platform support. Without a solution supporting all device types, some spaces get equipped with Microsoft Miracast, while others receive Apple AirPlay or Google Chromecast. As the college discovered, a patchwork approach based on specific requests of professors or lecturers lacks both the security and centralized management to ensure accountability and reliability.

While attempting to satisfy the various in-room requirements uncovered during testing, centralized management at scale quickly became a priority. Dr. Edris shared how a single management platform with remote centralized control for monitoring, updating, and maintenance was included as a requirement for any potential in-room solutions. With the pandemic at the center of the conversation, the ability to remotely monitor and manage all rooms and devices was table stakes for the technology team.

Once Dr. Edris, Mr. Thapaliya, and the Palm Beach State College team established evaluation criteria, the list was shared with technology partners to identify solutions for consideration. It was at this time that the ScreenBeam 1100P was recommended to the team as it addressed all three priorities: security, access, and scale. After testing on the main campus in Lake Worth, ScreenBeam became the clear choice for a collegewide deployment.

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Measuring Success

The team at Palm Beach State College determined what was necessary for success, then applied those priorities to considered solutions, with the result being a long-term strategy for hybrid enablement. In the months since, rooms across the college have been updated to include projectors, cameras, microphones, speakers, and ScreenBeam's wireless sharing solutions. While this may sound like a lot of change in a short timeframe, the solutions selected work together, making it easy for professors, presenters, and lecturers to build an active-learning environment. Furthermore, the deployed solutions are all remotely monitored to ensure connectivity and, when needed, provide technical assistance in a timely manner.

"Of all the solutions being deployed, the ScreenBeam devices had been the easiest to provision and manage"

Control Systems Programmer
Jhanak Thapaliya
Palm Beach State College

Mr. Thapaliya shared his thoughts on the deployment process, saying it was a clear sign of success from his perspective. He shared that of all the solutions being deployed, the ScreenBeam devices have been the easiest to provision and manage. When an issue presented itself in the first days of the rollout, ScreenBeam stepped in with a quick resolution. At the time of publication, almost two hundred ScreenBeam 1100P devices have been installed, provisioned, and deployed for use at Palm Beach State College over the past year.

A smooth installation is essential, but benefits can't be recognized until people use the product, and Dr. Edris addressed methods the college is implementing to track adoption and satisfaction. The largest feedback loop for the technology team is a yearly survey that features responses from everyone on every campus. While this method of surveying creates a delay in reporting, it benefits from a high level of participation.

Aside from the standard survey, the college features multiple active-learning studios which are testing conferencing capabilities for hybrid classes. Within these active-learning studios are additional surveys and feedback loops, serving to identify the best path for Palm Beach State College as it transitions to supporting hybrid learning. To date, the feedback on the new technology has been positive, and the school is using the studios to prepare the next features for collegewide release.

Future Success

In addition to the needs of today, investments made in technology need to address a wide range of hybrid use cases and applications that may be needed tomorrow. To prepare for the uncertainty of tomorrow, organizations and institutions must provide technology that adapts to emergent circumstances without compromising the experience of the participants. To do this, Palm Beach State College has ongoing testing of multi-platform support and BYOM (Bring Your Own Meeting) capabilities.

According to Mr. Thapaliya, the college plans to continue rolling out the advanced features of the ScreenBeam 1100P for the foreseeable future, making sure not to create too much change at once. Notably, the team plans to pair the ScreenBeam USB Pro Switch with the 1100P device in rooms that have Microsoft Teams Rooms deployed for hybrid lectures. Working in tandem, the Microsoft Teams Room and ScreenBeam will provide flexibility to professors, presenters, and participants. The user will experience the best of Teams Rooms with the ease of BYOM when needed.

The two-pronged approach of the 1100P with optional USB Pro Switch (conferencing enabled) reduces training without increasing the time for deployment or management – a rare win/win for IT management and end-users. In addition, the ScreenBeam 1100P isn't just a solution for today, but rather a deployment to grow with. Organizations crafting a long-term hybrid strategy for meeting spaces will benefit from conferencing capabilities that can be enabled to support both BYOM and room systems.
The benefits of the ScreenBeam solution go beyond the few critical features outlined. To better understand what sets ScreenBeam apart from other solutions, we'll be checking back in with Mr. Thapaliya and Dr. Edris on the success of the adoption. In addition, we'll be exploring other recent deployments to detail specific considerations and examples of hybrid at scale. To learn more about hybrid meeting spaces, please subscribe!