

**Products**

Planar Mosaic
Architectural Video Wall,
Clarity Matrix MultiTouch
LCD Video Wall System

Location

Evanston, Illinois

Industry

Higher Education

Application

Digital Signage

Partner

AVI Systems

LCD DISPLAYS CREATE CUTTING-EDGE RECRUITING
ENVIRONMENT FOR ESTEEMED UNIVERSITY

Northwestern University

Founded in 1851, Northwestern University (NU) is a private university based in Evanston, Illinois that is recognized both nationally and internationally for its innovative research and academic programs. Student recruitment is a key priority of the university as NU strives to attract top candidates of demonstrated academic achievement from diverse social, ethnic and economic backgrounds. Owing to NU's success in this area, more than 90 percent of undergraduate applicants rank in the top 10 percent of their high school classes.



“The Planar Mosaic and interactive Clarity Matrix MultiTouch video walls have transformed the visitor experience by bringing the Northwestern story to life.”

*– Margaret Cahow,
Marketing Manager,
Global Marketing,
Northwestern University*

To support the university’s recruitment efforts and provide a focal point on campus for welcoming prospective students and their families, a new state-of-the-art visitor’s center was completed in the fall of 2014. The Segal Visitors Center incorporates a sophisticated design with sustainable features, a 160-seat auditorium and a spacious two-story reception area. The modern interior of the 170,000-square foot facility includes floor-to-ceiling windows offering spectacular views of Lake Michigan, revealing the university’s distinct landscape and location.

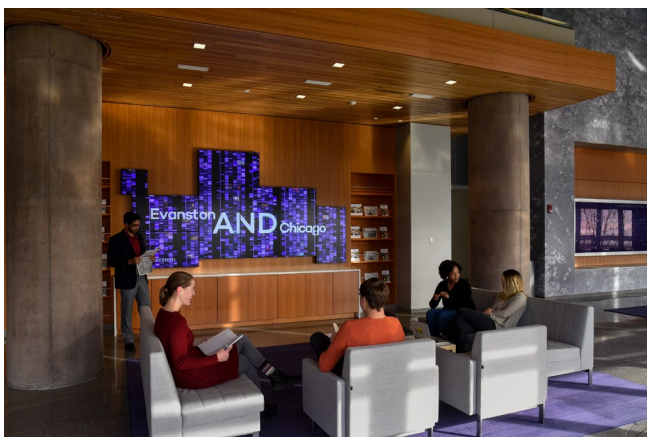
However, shortly after opening, NU’s Global Marketing team soon realized that the space—while visually stunning—didn’t fully communicate the academic value and unique experience that the university offers to students.

“On two large walls, 90-inch monitors played videos featuring various aspects of the university, but these displays fell short in terms of impression and engagement,” said Margaret Cahow, marketing manager of NU Global Marketing. “We needed a new display solution that was captivating, reflective of our innovation and allowed prospective students and families to really grasp what makes Northwestern different.”

It also became important to incorporate a video wall solution that was equally as striking as the building’s interior environment, enabling a more harmonious convergence of architecture and technology. After thoughtful consideration, Global Marketing replaced the monitors with a Planar® Mosaic® Architectural LCD Video Wall and a Clarity® Matrix® MultiTouch Interactive LCD Video Wall System from Planar.



The Planar Mosaic video wall includes an array of different-sized LCD display tiles consisting of five 55-inch rectangle tiles (AD-55 Vincent), two 46-inch rectangle tiles (AD-46 Pablo), and a single 22-inch square tile (AD-22 Salvador) that are arranged in an artistic linear pattern. The collective display, which enables for content to flow across and span the entire design, shows a 16-minute narrative film orchestrated to a scored soundtrack, showcasing the physical and cultural attributes of the NU campus.



The 20-foot-long, 6-foot-high interactive Clarity Matrix LCD video wall features a touchscreen discovery tool that invites people to explore over 160 stories highlighting students and faculty, leading research, current news and the vast academic and extracurricular opportunities available to incoming students. The interactive technology of the multi-touch video wall allows multiple users to explore a broad range of stories which dynamically move through three-dimensional simulated physics. Although the stories span many topics, each is focused on the university's multi-disciplinary approach to learning.

Interactive features foster deeper connections

Incorporating interactive technology as a key tool to NU's recruitment strategy is indicative of an expanding approach used by more universities that leverages vivid and dynamic video displays to both engage and impress student recruits.

"The Planar Mosaic and interactive Clarity Matrix video walls have transformed the visitor experience by bringing the Northwestern story to life and allowing for genuine, emotional connections with potential students and families," Cahow said. "Importantly, the innovative design features of the video walls help establish the university as embracing of leading-edge technology."



The video wall displays are particularly relevant in terms of connecting with today's tech-savvy youths, many of which have come to expect this level of technology, said Denny McDougald of AVI Systems, system integrator for the project. "The interactivity of the touchscreen is intuitive to student recruits. Since they are inherently drawn to this kind of technology, it becomes a great tool to captivate and reach them," he said.

Streamlined integration

The ability to naturally integrate the video wall systems within the space was another benefit offered by Planar. "The hardware for both video walls is located remotely in a service closet and is linked to the displays through simple daisy-chain connections, which eliminates the need to store cables or power supplies





behind the displays,” said McDougald. “With this configuration, it is much easier to service the hardware since there is no need to take the displays down.” David Burkee, an AV systems innovation engineer with NU who was closely involved with the project, said the ability to remotely store the power supplies was especially significant given the openness of the interior. “The fact that we could off-board the supporting equipment was a huge driver in allowing more possibilities as to where the displays could be located and how we could best utilize the space,” he said.

Failsafe technology, reliable solution

The strong reputation and overall reliability of Planar technologies played a key role in the decision to implement the Planar Mosaic and Clarity Matrix video walls. “The Visitors Center represents the gateway to the university, so it was very important to include a video wall solution with recognition, a history of high quality and 24x7 operational reliability,” Burkee said. “With the interactive video wall, up to 32 simultaneous touch points are possible. So, knowing that lots of visitors can use it every day without the technology failing is very reassuring.”

“The Visitors Center represents the gateway to the university, so it was very important to include a video wall solution with recognition.”

*– David Burkee,
AV Systems Innovation Engineer,
Northwestern University*

Project success inspires West Coast installation

Following implementation of the video walls, the overwhelmingly positive reaction generated among student recruits, families, and other guests encouraged NU to pursue another Planar installation at the university’s new satellite campus located in the heart of San Francisco. There, the main campus installation was duplicated to a close extent with the addition of Planar Mosaic and Clarity Matrix MultiTouch video walls. “The fact that we decided to install a very similar video wall solution at our San Francisco location really speaks to the success of the project,” Burkee said. “The displays have elevated the recruiting program by generating lots of excitement among prospective students and guests.”