

# HOWARD TECHNOLOGY REAL SOLUTIONS



## Oral Roberts University partners with Howard Technology Solutions To create more hybrid learning spaces—SafeFlex Classrooms

### Customer Profile

ORU is an interdenominational Christian, Spirit-empowered university located in Tulsa, Oklahoma. It is regionally accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. Under the leadership of Dr. William Wilson, ORU is preparing its students spiritually, mentally, and physically to be whole leaders for the whole world. It offers over 150 majors, minors, and pre-professional programs ranging from business and biology to engineering, nursing, ministry, and more. The university enrolls approximately 4,000 students.

### CARES Act

The CARES Act, signed into law on March 27, 2020, included funding for educational institutions to support teaching and learning in the wake of the COVID pandemic. According to CARES, educational technologies that aid in interaction between students and teachers are considered essential and local institutions have been allowed to determine and prioritize their specific needs.

ORU recognized that their most immediate need was to create more hybrid learning spaces, which they called ORU SafeFlex Classrooms. The decision was made to upgrade some of the legacy equipment on campus, which included transforming twenty-five classrooms into hybrid classrooms and completing the College of Business' primary conference room, aka "The Shark Tank."

### Objective

ORU's objective was to give every student a true in-class experience, one in which both virtual and on-campus students could see each other and interact and to make the faculty experience much more user friendly. Each of the SafeFlex Classrooms includes an audiovisual system that connects remote students virtually—safely.

But safety was only one aspect of this project. ORU has been consistently ranked in the top 10 engaging universities in the world. In 2020, The Wall Street Journal ranked ORU as the #5 university in the nation for student engagement. The design of the classroom needed to continue to foster this highly engaging environment.

It was also important to ORU that the solution decided on remain relevant for years to come, positively affecting TCO. Howard Technology Solutions worked closely with Michael Mathews, VP for technology and innovation, faculty, and the technology team to guarantee performance and long-lasting relevance.

Howard's new solutions included innovative audiovisual platform (AV over IP) that allowed a more collaborative and engaging environment. According to faculty, Howard's training and unique design of the new ORU SafeFlex classroom made everything work, while providing a user-friendly approach.

Much of the success around faculty training can be attributed to ORU's excellent online faculty Innovation hub, where resources for developing leaders can be found for almost any subject, including the technology training.

*"We are at an advantage when compared to other institutions similar to ORU. ORU is one of the safest places to be and to go to college."*

*"This was ORU's best year ever for rankings around the world. We had a record enrollment with summer classes during 2020 and a 33% growth rate in online learning. We had our 12th consecutive year of growth during the pandemic!"*

*"Because of Howard Technology Solutions and the technology they've placed here, we can now claim that we are #1."*

*"We'd like to say thank you to Howard Technologies for making this the best year ever at ORU!"*

*"The combination of Howard Technologies, the IT dept and academic training, made all the difference in the world!"*

*—CIO, Michael Mathews  
Oral Roberts University*

## College of Business—"The Shark Tank"

The Shark Tank, as it is currently known, was formerly a conference room for ORU's chemistry department. Transforming it into the multipurpose room used by fortune 500 companies under the leadership of Dr. Julie Huntley, Dean of the College Business, has allowed Howard Technology Solutions to design a world-class environment.

The Shark Tank includes an 86" fully interactive Newline display with matrix routing of all six NEC displays (5 in the front and one on the side); wireless connectivity; 2 Aver pan-tilt-zoom cameras for video conferencing needs via Seinheiser mic array and Crestron matrix switching and control system. Its striking marble top conference table is 24 ft long and seats 22 people. And at the far end of the room—beautiful energized glass that with a touch of the control system will project shadow, fog or clear effects.

This new collaborative space is used primarily for senior level classes, but also for faculty and executive level meetings, interviewing candidates for ORU's College of Business, small business consulting projects. and special occasions.



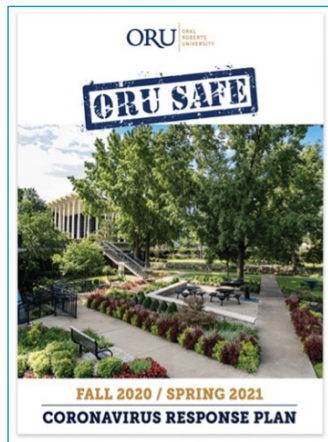
"The Shark Tank"

## ORU's SafeFlex Classrooms

Howard engineering worked with ORU representatives to develop potential ideas, which were presented and demonstrated to faculty. These included several configurations of Howard's Wireless Presenter and resulted in an overwhelmingly positive response. Approval was given to upgrade 25 pre-selected classrooms, with some using projectors/Solstice pods and others using NEC panel displays. Howard's Wireless Presenter is created using products from top manufacturing partners. Partner products that factor into this solution include:

- Pivot Premiere Spectrum Furniture
- Lumens LadyBug DC125
- Mersive Solstice
- Viewsonic panel displays
- Yamaha sound bar (CS-700AV-NA) and Mic system (XW-CS-700)
- StarTech cable
- Tripp Lite cable & power strip
- Chief stand/mount
- Logitech wireless keyboard
- NEC 65" Flat panel display
- Panasonic VMZ50U 3LCD projector
- USB webcam

According to Professor Gerald Landers of ORU's College of Education, "The implementation of this new technology allows remote students to feel as though they are sitting in the classroom, because it allows them to see the professor through the faculty-facing camera, the projection with class content, and others visuals the professor might wish to discuss through the provided document camera. Remote students may also see in-person students through the camera built into the soundbar." As to ease of use, he further commented "You don't even have to think about it, you just do it."



Professor Dr. Joel Gaikwad  
Testing out the new ORU SafeFlex Classroom design



Gerald Landers, Asst. Professor, Undergraduate Department,  
College of Education



Michael Mathews, CIO, Peter Kovaleski Director of IT, Deidre Carter, IT



Dr. Kim Boyd, Dean of College of Education

As to the effectiveness of their newly installed equipment, Dr. Kim Boyd had this to say: "Many times, we hear from both in-class students and those participating through zoom 'Can you please repeat that because we can't hear what you said.' With this, it's like bringing all the students together, whether they are participating through zoom or actually in class. That makes a huge difference in what our virtual students will experience this next semester with zoom in place. We feel confident every student will receive the educational experience they expect.

"The IT department has been phenomenal in helping us and providing us with the tools we need to educate our students. It was their support that enabled us to make this transition. IT looked at what the faculty needed for a hybrid classroom and responded by working with Howard to update the technology to meet our current demands. We couldn't be more pleased."