

**PHOENIX COLLEGE:  
UPGRADING A HISTORIC  
AUDITORIUM THE SMART WAY**

A NANOLUMENS CASE STUDY  
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## The Challenge:

Bulpitt Auditorium serves as the centerpiece for Phoenix College and hosts many important college, district and community events. When the almost century old institution needed to upgrade the auditorium with the latest video technology to entertain and inform attendees and aid them in educational endeavors, they turned to NanoLumens. The challenge was installing large LED displays in an environmentally friendly way while maintaining the historic feel of the facility.

## The History:



Believe it or not, when Phoenix College first opened the doors to Bulpitt Auditorium in 1939, people were already quite familiar with modern digital displays. They thrilled to them every Saturday morning in Flash Gordon serials at local movie theaters. But the thought of that kind of science fiction technology being employed at an educational facility almost 80 years ago was still the stuff of Popular Science Magazine. And because America was in the grips of the Great Depression, the college couldn't indulge itself in anything beyond their basic needs when they

took advantage of funds available from **President Roosevelt's** Public Works Administration for planning and construction.

Upon completion, the campus hall met the typical needs of a growing educational institution in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It had a stage and seating but not much else.

“I believe it did have a sound system as there was a small room just off stage left that looked down on the stage and there was a glass window in that space to see the stage,” says **Mike Poplin**, Director of Technology Support and Media Services. “All of the lighting and sound cables came up to that space.”

The first attempt to modernize the auditorium came about 75 years later when projectors were hung from the ceiling about 15 feet from the hall's screen. The results were less than appealing. Additionally, the auditorium's windows were dry walled over to help control lighting. Imagine being the deciding vote on dramatically altering a building almost certain to become a historic landmark.

So with an eye to the future, the decision was made to integrate full LED lighting and digital audio as well as upgrade the video presentation systems.

“We wanted to bring the technology current to today's expectations and what users of this space have become accustomed to in the community.” Explains Poplin. “Digital signage is everywhere, electronic billboards give us live updates on sporting events so why shouldn't the technology we deploy in this space not be state-of-the-art?”

## The Solution:

Great care was exercised in the planning and execution of the auditorium's renovation to preserve the integrity of the *Art-Deco/Early Mid-Century* design while bringing it up to current code compliance and functionality.

“Chip Shea of SPS+ Architects was retained to design the project. Chip is not only a certified acoustician, but has heavy experience in theater renovation.” States **Doug McCarthy**, Director, Phoenix College Facilities Planning & Development. “The success of this project was a result of a strong collaboration with the college's Facilities Planning, Administration, Music, and IT departments. The vision and goal was to create an environment conducive to compete with and/or exceed modern Phoenix venues, while honoring the past glory of the historic building.”

Along with the installation of all new electric rigging and drapes, LED lighting, mechanical systems, structural enhancements and cosmetic renovations, Phoenix College chose NanoLumens to supply two 5mm NanoSlim displays, each measuring 181” diagonally, based on several important characteristics.



“No other company comes close to offering the same combination of technology, customization, and warranty.” Poplin said. “Our new installation is expected to have a lifespan of 100,000 hours or 11 years, whichever comes first, and NanoLumens is guaranteeing this performance with its unprecedented six-year, zero defect warranty program.”

Equally impressive was the fact the NanoLumens displays are ultra-thin and lightweight, manufactured in America, feature ‘hot-swappable’ LED pixels, are front serviceable, deliver a seamless bezel-free viewing experience and designed to be extremely quiet and energy efficient.

“The selection of NanoLumens became the right one for us,” Poplin emphasized.

## The Results:

The NanoLumens LED displays are now installed and performing above the expectations of the students, staff and faculty of Phoenix College.



“We wanted to maintain the character and showcase the history of this space while making it technology friendly within today's new paradigm.” Poplin said. “We think we have done this, it is environmentally friendly, and it is the latest state-of-the-art in lighting, sound, and video.”

And the windows that were covered up? The college was able to unseal them, finally restoring the natural lighting the auditorium originally had.

Click here to see [a time lapse video](#) of the construction.