

Customer Spotlight: University of Pittsburgh



In a Nutshell

Due to the novel coronavirus, the University of Pittsburgh held its 2020 [commencement ceremony](#) virtually. **Pitt partnered with Verbit to provide its live captioning expertise to ensure the ceremony was accessible to families tuning in live globally from 35 countries.** The Monday following the event, Pitt reported 52,000 video views and nearly 5 million social impressions, demonstrating significant video engagement. The event celebrated more than 8,000 graduates. While Pitt is highly committed to regularly providing captioning, the high-profile commencement environment featuring unscripted speakers presented a new challenge.

“The Verbit Zoom integration has been such a tremendous bonus, which I know has been a relatively new initiative with Verbit. It certainly came up at the right time for us as an institution, having to shift in a very rapid manner to a remote learning platform. It's been a critical piece.”



Leigh Culley, Director of Disability Resources and Services



The Challenges

The University of Pittsburgh always knew captioning would be provided for the virtual ceremony. “Captioning is a non-negotiable for us, especially with an event of this size,” said Kate Ledger, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Marketing. Originally, the ceremony was going to be pre-recorded, which would make captioning easier to do with its production company. However, the Chancellor was insistent on including four live speakers who were participating via Zoom. Less than one week prior to the commencement, the media company Pitt hired for the event noted they couldn’t provide live captioning on Zoom.



The University of Pittsburgh is a state-related research university in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania with nearly 28K students, including more than 19K undergraduates. The University of Pittsburgh is one of the world’s most respected and productive research universities. It prides itself on its talented, diverse and high-achieving students who learn from world-renowned faculty members.

The Solution

Pitt's disability resources team recommended Verbit, whose leadership was willing to jump on the ceremony's technical rehearsal mere days out, test the technology and adapt it to ensure a smooth process. Benefits included:

- **Live services:** Real-time CART services met the disability needs of viewers and provided additional remote viewers with the visual aid of live captions
- **Ease of use:** Verbit's live captioning integrated with Zoom and was flexible enough to incorporate Pitt's individual needs
- **Effective global engagement:** Students and families participating remotely were able to engage virtually with an accessible livestream

"I have an email that I copy and paste, because people ask me [about the live captions] all the time. So I just say: Here's Verbit... I have been giving out rave reviews too because that was a really important part. So thanks for instilling confidence in me."

Kate Ledger, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Marketing



The Results

✓ Accommodation of changing needs

"Scott [our customer success manager] and Verbit were both able to adjust to continuous needs that we've had as an institution, including the moving courses to a remote setting prior to commencement. I think that it's been a great partnership all around. Pre-COVID, certainly we've been well established with Verbit, but the past 7 or 8 weeks have been super, and I really appreciate everything."

✓ Sparking additional faculty interest

Due to this successful experience, Pitt's School of Medicine reached out to Culley and the commencement team about implementing live captions for their 2020 virtual celebration as well.

✓ Engaging a diverse audience

"Knowing that there's a diverse audience of different types of individuals, different ages, who speak different languages, I think it was very helpful from a Universal Design standpoint to have captioning. So that those who just learn in different ways would benefit from gathering information through captioning is critical, and this allowed all different individuals to feel a part of the celebration."

✓ An ideal partnership

Verbit and Pitt arranged a rehearsal, identified challenges and resolved them with transparency. Collaborative feedback allowed the teams to prime the event and live technology with the best opportunity to perform at an optimal pace and accuracy in an environment with dynamic speakers and conversational overlap.

✓ Dedicated customer support

Verbit's team participated in calls and the rehearsal to provide higher education and captioning expertise to ensure accurate delivery for Pitt's event. "Scott [Ready of Verbit] has been very available at every turn. So I think Kate's experience with the virtual celebration mimicked my experience with working with Scott and with the company prior to that."

✓ Dynamic technology

Verbit's technology was agile enough to incorporate necessary changes customized to Pitt's needs. It was prepped with key terminology and technical terms to ensure the actual commencement captioning occurred seamlessly.

For more information, visit verbit.ai

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