

Customer: British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT)



SITUATION

The British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) is a leading technical education provider. Ensuring that students and faculty have access to current technology that enhances learning and teaching is part of BCIT's mandate.

In March of 2007, the BCIT Mathematics department successfully applied for the TEK (technology enabled knowledge) grassroots program, an initiative to enhance teaching and learning at BCIT through the strategic use of technology. The objective of the project was to assess the value of Tablet PC technology in the classroom for the Institute.

SOLUTION

Prior to the Tablet PC project, instructors in the Mathematics Department relied upon digital projectors and whiteboards for classroom lectures. Many instructors found it very inconvenient to sign out a digital projector and take it to class, even though the Mathematics Department has two light weight digital projectors of their own. It was time consuming and it was not always easy to set up the projector so that all the students could see the screen.

Through the pilot project the Mathematics Department purchased Tablet PCs to be used for the length of one term, in 10 classes for 260 students. The Tablet PCs provided significant opportunities for instructors to change their teaching practices in a variety of ways. When using a Tablet PC, presentation notes can be prepared leaving blank areas in the notes to allow teachers to write handwritten comments, present new exercises and draw equations during class rather than being "locked in" to using pre-developed materials in traditional PowerPoint formats, enabling educators to capture the "live" element of their lessons. A convenient, time saving tool of the Tablet PC is the ability to convert digital hand-written class notes to typewritten text for easy access. An added benefit of Tablet PC use in large lecture theatres is the assurance that all students can visually see the instructor working through activities or problems.

BENEFITS

At the end of the term, 260 students from ten different math classes were surveyed on how they perceived the use of Tablet PC technology in the classroom.

- 83% ranked Tablet PCs their most favoured presentation tool.

- 96% of the students felt more engaged during the lecture when the instructor used a Tablet PC.

Out of 260 surveys, 105 students made written comments. Ninety-two of these comments directly address how much they enjoyed lectures which used the Tablet PC. None of the comments were negative.

- *It's handy and innovative. Overall impressive and great. Love to see every instructor use it!!*
- *I really felt like the Tablets improved the learning quality. They are easy to read, and good for highlighting without getting crowded on the page.*

Instructors who used a Tablet PC in the Mathematics department were very impressed and found it relatively easy to transfer their existing lectures over to the new format. All 17 faculty members who used a Tablet PC indicated they want to continue to use them and recommended the Tablet PC project be expanded. Due to the success of the pilot project BCIT has since purchased 80 Tablet PCs.

The Tablet PC project allowed the faculty in the Mathematics Department to improve the visual literacy and interaction in lecture presentations through the use of Tablet PC technology, ultimately enhancing the student experience.