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## Classroom Collaboration Award

The College of Engineering continues to pioneer PCs in the classroom, now wirelessly linking 250 tablet-toting students in a lecture hall to their instructor for real-time, online activities like note taking, diagnostic quizzing, and instant opinion polling

The effort was recognized with a Laureate designation in the Education and Academia category presented at the Computerworld 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Laureates Gala Awards Evening in Washington, D.C., on June 4.

In an introductory engineering class, Tom Walker, professor of engineering education, has revamped his teaching methods to take advantage of new technology, using a new software teaching package called DyKnow. DyKnow provides unique interactivity between the instructor and the class via the Tablet PC.

The Tablet PC initiative is led by a team comprised of Engineering faculty including Walker and Engineering’s Associate Dean Glenda Scales, Kimberly Gausepohl, manager of Online Course Systems in Learning Technologies, Steven Lee, Communications Research Engineering in Network Infrastructure & Services, and representatives from the Office of Distance Learning and Computing in the College of Engineering. Through the support of Microsoft and Fujitsu in the form of the Virginia Tech Premier Alliance, the college has gathered research evidence on the effective use of Tablet PCs and will be able to share this information with the broader education community.

One of the biggest challenges for the team was implementing a wireless infrastructure that worked in a lecture hall setting. While wireless networks are reliable with small user numbers, it is difficult to provide an efficient network in high client density settings. CNS provided a live test environment using Professor Walker’s class of 250 wireless clients. Various wireless technologies and techniques were tested and evaluated, and parameters and techniques were defined to optimize the wireless network in a large classroom environment that can be extrapolated to other classrooms.

For more information, see:

[www.vtnews.vt.edu/story.php?relyear=2007&itemno=128](http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/story.php?relyear=2007&itemno=128)

[www.cwhonors.org/viewCaseStudy.asp?NominationID=291](http://www.cwhonors.org/viewCaseStudy.asp?NominationID=291)

Check the May ITELL for an updated list of service recognition individuals.

## Personal and sensitive data

Do you have personal and sensitive data on your computers? Do you know?

First, use the VT-developed scanning tool ([security.vt.edu](http://security.vt.edu)) to see if Social Security numbers (SSNs) are stored on your computer.

Then, evaluate whether you need SSNs or other personal and sensitive data on your machine(s). If you need to maintain sensitive data, it is important that you use available encryption tools. Two open source encryption solutions that users can consider are PGP (Pretty Good Privacy) at [www.pgp.com/](http://www.pgp.com/) and TrueCrypt ([www.truecrypt.org/](http://www.truecrypt.org/)).

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## Blackboard upgrade

As of June 4th, all courses have been moved from the old Blackboard 6.2 system to the new Blackboard 7.1 instance. Load and stress testing of Bb7 has concluded, and while we still need to weather the start of Fall term, the upgrade and migration have been successful to this point.

Success of this project is directly attributed to the professionalism, skills, and collaboration of the Information Technology groups involved in the upgrade.

These groups and individuals were instrumental in accomplishing this work:

Learning Technologies:	DBMS:	NI&S:
David Adams	Bill Dooley	Tim Rhodes
Kim Gausepohl	Richard Quintin	Bill Ranck
Will Humphries		John Homer
Dawn Eckert		Wanda Baber
Marc Zaldivar		Roy Vickers
		Judy Albert

This major upgrade of an enterprise system involving the relocation and conversion of 20,000 courses was accomplished within the scheduled downtime of only 12 hours.

*Information Technology personnel have been intensively involved in establishing VT Alerts, an integrated and coordinated emergency notification system. For more information, see [www.vtnews.vt.edu/story.php?relyear=2007&itemno=363](http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/story.php?relyear=2007&itemno=363).*

*Appearing the May/June Educause Review, William O. Plymale, "Do We Need Discreet Computing in Instruction?" [www.educause.edu/irl/library/pdf/erm07310.pdf](http://www.educause.edu/irl/library/pdf/erm07310.pdf)*

Virginia Tech has contracted with Percussion Software for the Rhythmyx Web content management system. The selection committee chose Percussion Rhythmyx for, among other things, its superior user interface, separation of style and content, scalability, and its aggressive product development cycle.

Initial plans call for the system to be installed within the next 4-6 weeks and for the primary VT.edu website to be migrated during the pilot phase in late summer and early fall.

Read more at the Web development blog: <http://www.ee.unirel.vt.edu/index.php/webcomm/>