

TABLET PCS

The College of William & Mary

How can a school turn traditional classroom and lecture-hall teaching into a super-interactive experience that students embrace? Bring on the tablet PCs.

For many students, large lecture courses can be challenging environments in which to learn. The room is so big! The slides are so small! And the teacher—in some classes, it's like he or she is lecturing from Timbuktu.

Perhaps this is why a recent effort at **The College of William & Mary** (VA) to use tablet PCs to improve teaching and learning in large lecture classes garnered so many kudos. The project, designed to encourage faculty to seamlessly inte-

Professor Coleman's students cite his innovative technology use as their favorite class feature.

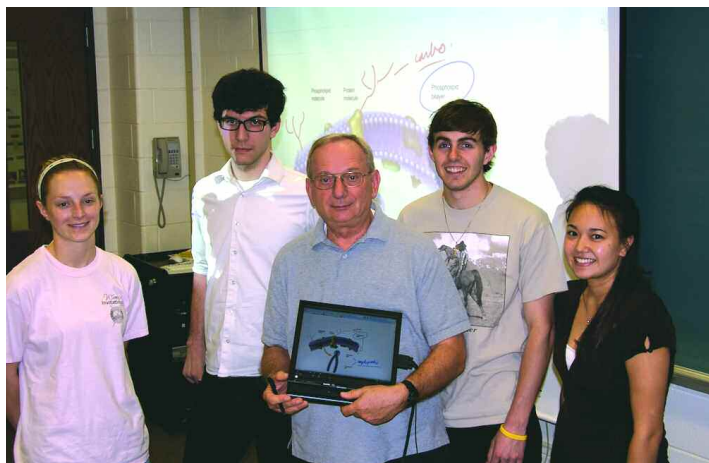
dents become more engaged. At the same time, he was one of a handful of leading educators to sign up for William & Mary's Technology Integration Program (TIP), which sought faculty willing to embrace collaboration and experimentation in front of their students. For his participation in this group, Coleman received a Lenovo (www.lenovo.com) tablet PC. His mission: to incorporate that tablet into ordinary classroom life.

With the help of OneNote software from Microsoft (www.microsoft.com), as well as Adobe Acrobat (www.adobe.com), Coleman moved the tablet to the core of teaching and learning. He rejiggered his lectures and rewrote his presentation slides; he even turned to the campus IT department for Inter- netVue wireless display devices from Addlogix (www.addlogix.com), to facilitate untethered use of tablets with projection systems so that he could be free to walk about the lecture hall interacting and collaborating with his students, and they with each other, as the class viewed the work together.

Once the system was in place, students were able to submit their work electronically, either via e-mail before class, remotely from home, or via wireless during the class itself. When it came time for grading, Coleman marked up students' electronically submitted work, just as he would have with paper and pen. He also started attaching podcast-like audio, in order to share his thoughts on sections and the overall assignment—a feature that impressed students so dramatically, many of them shared the audio files with family, friends, and roommates.

Results of this effort were eye-opening. According to Coleman's grade sheet, the approach led to greatly improved learning and note-taking, and some of the highest student grades ever in his course. Student appreciation of their instructor was enhanced, as well: In the most recent teacher-evaluation exercise, Coleman received the highest possible instructor ratings from his students, most of whom cited his innovative technology use as their favorite thing about his classes.

Down the road, the Coleman strategy for teaching large lectures may be going prime time. A number of other departments on campus have expressed interest in adopting the same methodology, which ultimately could lead to institutionalizing Coleman's approach. On a larger scale, school officials report that they have adapted the podcast feedback strategy for peer review of journal articles, a process that will launch in earnest with the beginning of the coming school year.



Pablo Yanez

PROFESSOR RANDY COLEMAN revolutionized the teaching paradigm, and kept his Chemistry students interested for the duration of his lectures and beyond.

grate tablets into large lectures, labs, and professional work, was particularly embraced by Randy Coleman, associate professor of chemistry. Along the way, Coleman revolutionized the teaching paradigm, and kept students interested for the duration of his lectures, and often beyond.

Tammy Thrift, senior academic technologist and IT project manager, says that for Coleman, a 60-something academic with a passion for teaching, the project's emphasis on the student was always the largest part of the equation.

"Too often with integration and infrastructure, there is a focus on technology. But we chose not to overlook the human element," she says. "Additionally, technology projects tend to be developed in isolation. Instead, we developed a sustainable, scalable model with real 'bang for the buck.'"

Coleman's grand experiment began in the spring of 2007. After teaching large science lectures for what seemed like eons, the professor was itching to try new technologies, to help stu-