

Lightweight, wireless, portable - tablet computer offers multiple functions

MARTIN, Tenn. - This fall, one-third of the University of Tennessee at Martin faculty will begin using new technology - convertible tablet computers. The computers are provided by the Faculty Computer Rotation plan implemented through the Division of Academic Affairs and Information Technology Services.

A convertible tablet computer is light weight, wireless, portable, can record and translate voice into text, and can record and translate handwriting into text. Initially, it will be used in the faculty member's office as a desktop by connecting to a docking station. The tablet computer configuration has all of the features of a standard desktop. Next, it can be used as a mobile wireless notebook computer in the classroom, at home, in meetings and at conferences. Also, it can be used as electronic paper anywhere. The screen rotates to become a flat writing surface with a Digitizer Pen using Microsoft Digital Ink Technology to record notes or annotate presentations, while being displayed to a class or audience through a projector. The notes or annotated presentations can be saved and e-mailed to students or stored on the Blackboard learning management system or other shared storage area for later reference. "

The mobile nature and multiple functions available through the Gateway convertible tablet computer will provide faculty with new tools for continuing to improve the curriculum and learning methods available at UT Martin," said Shannon Burgin, information technology services director. "These new technology tools also will assist faculty in preparing students for the work place of the future." "The new tablet PCs really allow a lot of flexibility in how we use computers," said Dr. Tim Burcham, professor of agricultural engineering and chairholder, Gil Parker Chair of Excellence in Agriculture and Natural Resources. "For the first time, we can use the familiar pencil and paper interface to communicate ideas. I see numerous ways the tablet PC can be used to improve instruction." He added, "The tablets allow professors to quickly post handwritten notes, problem solutions, etc. to the web."

Jim Bruce, communications instructor, agreed and said, "The ability to add notations to existing PowerPoint programs while they are being projected on the screen will be a nice addition to my use of PowerPoint for lectures. Of course, having the port to attach to at the office is really convenient, and the tablet feature will come in handy for meetings."

Dr. Nancy Warren, chairman of the department of nursing, added, "I am so proud to have the new Gateway tablet because I can take notes in committee meetings, use the notepad in lectures and circle important items in red which will project on a large screen, take advantage of the very fast e-mail, which I use a lot, and burn much more information on the CDs than the previous discs. We have really jumped into the 21st century with our wireless computer technology, and I am so glad to be in the first rotation to receive this great new machine," Warren said. "UT Martin is the largest M275 tablet implementation in Tennessee," said Paige Scott, Gateway field account executive. "UT Martin recognizes that technology complements how instructors deliver the educational experience, and students will be more engaged in the learning process. Additionally, UT Martin has delivered instruction and training to ensure success of the program," Scott said. Gateway and the UT Martin Computer Store are providing training sessions for all faculty who are receiving the convertible tablet computers. The UT Martin Instructional Technology Center also will provide additional training and assistance. "UT Martin continues its tradition of embracing new technology to enhance teaching and expand knowledge and to support its mission of providing a quality undergraduate education," said Burgin.