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San Jacinto College

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Pasadena, Texas-based San Jacinto College was in need of an update in terms of integrating technology and learning. Professors needed more options and fewer headaches when it came to presenting information in class, while students were lacking readily available hardware and software as well as technology-appropriate work areas.



After a bond initiative was passed in 1999, San Jacinto College launched a major construction project: six new buildings on its three campuses. Three of the six buildings are technology centers known at the college as Interactive Learning Centers, a label that more clearly suggests that in these classrooms and labs technology is seen as a means to an end—learning in all fields—not an end in itself.

For faculty teaching in the centers, using technology to teach has become simplified while, at the same time, teaching options have multiplied. Each classroom in the new centers has a dual presentation wall, allowing two types of information to be simultaneously presented from two different technology sources. All of the technology is controlled from one location—the teaching

podium—so the professor can focus on teaching, not technology. Various layouts throughout the building allow faculty to choose a room that fits their teaching styles and needs.

For students, the new centers have provided more space and more possibilities. Larger-than-standard workspace surfaces easily accommodate a laptop computer, a pad of paper and a textbook. In addition, there are no cables to fumble with or trip over. The centers provide wireless Internet access, and all necessary cables and wires are run through the PREMISE systems furniture and Tactics tables directly into the floor. Comfortable Improv chairs and wide aisles were also planning priorities made with student needs in mind.

In addition to four levels of classrooms, designed for the technology needs of varying levels of instruction in mind, the Interactive Learning Centers have specialty rooms: a collaboration

room that allows for technology teaming; a “kaleidoscope room” featuring entirely mobile furniture on wheels in a theater-in-the-round format; a teaching theater with customized furniture; video conferencing classrooms; conference rooms for meetings and seminar classes; a cyber café with popular To-Do chairs; and computer labs with more than 125 computers.

Niki Whiteside, the Construction Project Director for the college, says the student reaction has been overwhelmingly positive. “These new buildings provide student resources we’ve never had before,” says Whiteside. “It makes integrating technology almost effortless and takes learning to a different level.”

