



University of Minnesota: A School with a Rich History Looks to the Future

What started off as an experiment—adding Wacom displays to a professor’s presentation system—turned into an integral part of the way teaching is done at the University of Minnesota.

The University of Minnesota has been around for over 150 years—there’s a lot of history there. But this venerable institution isn’t about living in the past. In fact, they’re busy putting futuristic technology in the hands of their instructors.

“I think every instructor encourages students to ask questions,” says Dr. Mark Decker. “Using our new presentation technology allows much more of that.” Dr. Decker and Richard Peifer developed a system that would give instructors at the U of M the ability to annotate, animate, go online and launch applications—all from a lecturer’s podium. With the help of Wacom’s interactive pen displays, they were able to create a presentation system that puts all this power at the instructor’s fingertips.

“One of the things the faculty has always wanted to be able to do was to teleillustrate—to write on top of graphics, or point to things,” says Rick Peifer. “When I first saw Wacom’s line of interactive pen displays, I knew I had to get one and check it out. I asked our software designer if we could build in a whiteboard feature, and be able to draw on images. In a short period of time, it was done, and the experiment was so promising that we added three more.”

“I loved the capability to be able to write on graphics,” says Dr. Decker. “You can even electronically erase with a stroke of the pen. You don’t get ink all over everything, you don’t have to search for colors, and you can use the pen as a navigational tool instead of the mouse. It really has become an integral part of our teaching. I don’t think there’s a faculty member out of the 20 or so that teach in our program that would feel comfortable abandoning it.”

“I think every instructor encourages students to ask questions,” says Dr. Mark Decker. “Using our new presentation technology allows much more of that.”

“The first time I used the pen-controlled presentation system, I fell in love with it immediately. This was my dream digital overhead projector.”

– Dr. Mark Decker
University of Minnesota

