

College of Vet Med moves to paperless note-taking

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The first day of classes for most K-State students typically involves a syllabus handout and scribbled notes.

However, the first day was a little different for first-year students in the College of Veterinary Medicine.

The college is transitioning to a paperless curriculum, which includes integrating the system with the veterinary medicine class of 2011.

The new curriculum will save time, effort and money for the college by eliminating paper notes and textbooks and giving students and professors more class time to discuss in-depth topics, said Melinda Wilkerson, College of Veterinary Medicine associate dean and professor.

"We are feeling very optimistic about the new curriculum and want to see students take advantage of all the perks offered by the new technology," Wilkerson said.

First-year students in veterinary medicine received their personal Toshiba tablet laptops last week, said Wayne Michaels, Computing and Technical Support coordinator for the college. He also said the CaTS team presented one-hour tutorials for the first-year students. The tutorial was designed to instruct students and faculty on the Microsoft Office OneNote software that will be used in the classrooms.

"Microsoft Office OneNote 2007 is a digital notebook that provides a flexible way to gather and organize much more than just your notes," according to Microsoft's Web site. The Web site also explains that OneNote's "powerful search enables you to find information where you couldn't before, such as spoken words in audio and video recordings and text in scanned documents or pictures."

While programs like this are convenient, they are not free.

Students will pay for their laptops in semester installments of \$300 during the course of their four-year veterinary medicine education, Wilkerson said.

"This technology fee is included in the students' tuition and replaces their note-service fee," Wilkerson said. "In the long run, it will save them money because it is only slightly more than paying for all of the paper notes we provide for the students."

The tablet laptops are the personal property of the student possessing them and theirs to keep even when they graduate, Michaels said. He also said the laptops are equipped with a four-year warranty through Toshiba to protect students in case of an accident.

The CaTS team also is ready to handle any glitches that might arise in the first few uncertain weeks of classes and already has installed each laptop with virus protection, Michaels said.

"We know we've probably made a few mistakes, but we're being very open with students and feel that we're prepared to handle any problems that we find," Michaels said. "So far there haven't been any issues, but it is a new program, and we're all learning."

Michaels, along with three full-time technicians, said he is certified to do maintenance on the laptops. One extra technician was hired specifically to handle issues with the laptops and OneNote software, and there is a hotline for students to call when problems arise, Michaels said. Wireless technology also will be available for students and

faculty to purchase, Michaels said.

While veterinary medicine is the first college to switch to a paperless curriculum at K-State, K-State is not the first university to do so. Medical colleges, particularly nursing and dental programs, across the country are making the switch to a more efficient paperless curriculum, Wilkerson said.

Students also have expressed their opinions on the new curriculum.

"This is absolutely much easier than carrying around a ton of books and binders for class," said Amy Keller, first-year student in veterinary medicine. "It is something we will definitely have to get used to, but I think we will all easily adjust to the new curriculum, and we feel pretty lucky to be the first group of students at the school to get to use the program."

Keller' said her main concern was losing all of her information and notes if something happened to her computer.

"It's a relief to know that the CaTS team is there to help us with anything that goes wrong," Keller said.

Chris Hansen, first-year student in veterinary medicine, said he felt the paperless curriculum is a step in the right direction in making classes and studying more organized processes.

"It's a really good program and offers us a lot of freedom with our organization and note-taking," Hansen said. "I don't mind being a guinea pig."