



"Class, Take [Plasma] Boards!"

*By Dr. Mark Evans,
Director of the Center for Teaching Excellence*

Classrooms at West Point have come a long way in the past generations. "Take Boards!" has taken on a new meaning in the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) classroom, located in room 115 of the newly constructed Jefferson Hall Library and Learning Center. When cadets take boards in the CTE classroom, they are standing in front of one of six 50-inch, plasma displays situated around the classroom, not at chalk boards. Not only are cadets able to brief boards while standing at their plasma screens, but using the latest technology, they can mark-up the document directly on the plasma screen. The instructor also can mark-up the document from the front of the room, or permit any cadet in the room to mark on the document while he or she is still seated in front of a laptop computer. This space was designed to be an electronic, collaborative environment, where several participants (the instructor, cadets, and even remote participants) may all simultaneously collaborate on the same document and then save that work to a hard drive at the end of the session. Also part of this classroom is a Video Tele-Conferencing capability, so that a participant half-way around the world can collaborate on documents there in real time. Wow, classrooms certainly have evolved, thanks to the Class of 1954!

This new classroom has only been available since the fall semester of 2008, and in those two semesters, a substantial number of faculty and cadets have collaborated on a wide array of classes there:

CPT Scott Blanchard, DPE,
PE350: Army Fitness Development
MAJ Edward Cox, SOSCI,
SS202: Political Science



MAJ Aram Donigian, BS&L,
 PL300: Military Leadership
 Dr. Michael Edwards, English,
 EN302: Advanced Composition
 MAJ Raymond Kimball, History,
 HI107: Western Civilization
 LTC Gary T. Kropkowski, LAW,
 LAW403: Constitutional and Military Law
 MAJ Angelica Martinez, SOSCI,
 SS307: International Relations
 LTC Hector R. Morales-Negron, DPE,
 PE350: Army Fitness Development
 MAJ Rebecca Patterson, SOSCI,
 XH467: Winning The Peace
 Dr. Karen Peirce, English,
 EN101: English Composition
 Dr. Laura L. Vidler, DFL,
 LS362: Intermediate Spanish II

The technology and features of the room have been lauded by the faculty. Representative comments regarding their use of the room include:

The CTE classroom allowed me to: "... highlight cadet individual and group work, increase the quality of out-of-class prep, allow cadets to create take-home packages from classroom work," and enhanced my teaching of the course by "...help(ing) me make the learning more active and more visual on the part of the cadet. It facilitated collaborative techniques."—MAJ Aram Donigian, PL300

"I used the classroom (to) allow the cadets to plan their unit presentation as I supervise the development on the screens. The classroom provides me the opportunity to make corrections or point out outstanding strategies students are using. Without this equipment,



Demonstrating the plasma boards.

cadets will work this project in a vacuum and active learning does not occur. The ability for me to see their work and for the students to be able to comment and work better in groups is unique to the classroom and it has greatly improved the end state of the final project. I am constantly recommending this facility to the instructors that I mentor."—LTC Hector R. Morales-Negron, PE350

"Also, independent controls (allow the) simultaneous display of a map, a graphic, and related text and (let) students integrate all three. The collaborative functions ... let ... students (work together) on a digital timeline much more effectively than (is possible) on a conventional whiteboard—and the result was portable at the end, rather than being fixed in position."—MAJ Raymond Kimball, HI107

The original version of this room was outfitted in 1994 and made possible by a gift from the Class of 1954. The original intent of the classroom was to create a high-technology environment that would be used by a large number of cadets. This second generation of the classroom, in its new location, meets all the original intents and continues to be supported by the Class of 1954.

Additional testimonials from faculty and videos of faculty and cadets in the classroom may be seen at: <http://www.dean.usma.edu/centers/cte/CTE121Testimonials.cfm>. Additional views of the classroom and descriptions of the equipment installed there may be seen at: <http://www.dean.usma.edu/centers/cte/atcl54.cfm>.

For more information about this classroom please contact Dr. Mark Evans, Director of the Center for Teaching Excellence (mark.evans@usma.edu), or Mr. Patrick Gill, Manager of Instructional Technology for the CTE (patrick.gill@usma.edu).

Thanks, Class of 1954! 



Collaborating via cadet laptops is easy.