

Universities plan to test hand-held computers

BY COURTNEY GAILLARD
THE CHRONICLE

Hand-held personal computers (PCs) are making their way into the classroom at Wake Forest University and Winston-Salem State University. The WFU information systems staff has designed software specifically for the wireless PDAs (Personal Digital Assistant) to be used as a communication tool between students and professors during lectures.

WFU developers are calling the new technology PocketClassroom, and it will soon be trademarked by the university. The program was created to create a more interactive atmosphere in the classroom where students and instructors can communicate via the hand-held PDA by sending private messages during class.

Rick Matthews' physics class was one of the first classes to test PocketClassroom last year. Matthews said it was a big hit with both himself and his students.

"I found (the PDA) did wonderful things for the dynamics of the class. The class became much more interactive because the (PDA) provided a transition towards speaking up in class. Many students are reluctant to speak up in physics class and it makes for a gradual transition to students speaking up. Classes become more lively," said Matthews, chair of the physics

department at WFU.

Carolyn Anderson, curriculum designer at Winston-Salem State University, said the university will be testing PocketClassroom this fall with a pilot group of students and faculty across five majors. According to Anderson, WSSU was interested in using the PDA as a tool students could use for computing that wouldn't take up too much desk space as well as a way for an exchange of feedback during lectures.

The chance to make students "better critical thinkers" is what Anderson says WSSU believes to be the advantage to bringing hand-helds into the classroom. No longer will students have to rely on trips to the computer lab to monitor the stock market or access an Internet site. By 2003, WSSU will require each incoming freshman to purchase a PDA and desktop computer to meet his or her technical and academic needs.

One option the PDA offers is a mood meter, where the professor can gauge how well the students are understanding a specific topic. Matthews was also able to administer impromptu quizzes called concept tests, where students can answer questions on PDAs and send the answers directly to his device. Matthews would receive their responses in the form of a number scaled graph to reveal how many students answered correctly, indicating

if further review of the topic was needed.

The hand-held PC is a great way for teachers to assess their teaching methods, said Matthews, who is excited about the prospect of using a device like a PDA in the future to improve classes he teaches, by topic and concept, where professors can measure students' comprehension in "real time."

"(PocketClassroom) does a lot to overcome reluctance of class speaking. Student evaluations skyrocketed when the concept test was implemented in class," said Matthews, who said his physics students really enjoyed the interaction that developed as a result of using the hand-helds.

A big challenge in teaching physics, Matthews said, is to get students to "intellectually engage the materials in class," and the PDA was a great tool in stimulating class participation and more effective communication between the students and Matthews.

After successfully incorporating laptops into the curriculum at WFU, Anne Bishop, director of research and development at WFU, says the school became interested in the incredible mobility of the PDA devices.

"As technology changes, people look for more ways to create activity in classes for all students and no longer make note taking the only (way of learning) during a lecture,"



Photo by Courtney Gaillard

Anne Bishop, director of research and development for information systems at Wake Forest University, holds one of the hand-held personal computers.

said Bishop.

According to Bishop, the hand-held PC allows students to ask questions instantly and anonymously during a class, a luxury for those who fear of speaking in front of a full room. The instructor can decide to address the question in class or with the student individually after class.

Matthews' physics class was a great help to the university, providing insight on how students and professors should manage the devices, Bishop said. The software is now available on the WFU campus as an option for faculty. Students with laptops can also communicate with their professors who use hand-held

PCs. The software can be downloaded at no expense by any educational institution from the Wake Forest Web site. East Carolina University and Winston-Salem State University are among the 30 schools nationwide that have already downloaded the software.



File Photo

The first marriages of black women break up faster than the first marriages of other women, a report says.

Marriage

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attainment and earnings; their previous experiences as children of unmarried or less-educated parents, and higher rates of poverty and lack of job opportunities in the communities in which they live.

The findings in this report suggest that individual characteristics such as race/ethnicity may not be the sole determinants of marital and cohabitation success. The neighborhoods in which people live may be important, and differences in marital and cohabitation outcomes between white and black women may depend to some extent on the community environments in which the women live.

Both non-Hispanic white women and non-Hispanic black women who live in neighborhoods with high levels of poverty, receipt of welfare and unemployment, and low levels of income and education are more likely to experience separation and divorce. Black women live disproportionately in low-SES (socioeconomic status) neighborhoods. Whether the lower marital success of black women is due to their disproportionate prevalence in low-SES neighborhoods, to individual characteristics, or to other factors, is a question for further study.

Some of the other findings of the study:

By age 30, three-quarters of women in the United States have been married and about half have

cohabited outside of marriage.

Both cohabitations and marriages tend to last longer under certain conditions, such as: a woman's age at the time cohabitation or marriage began; whether she was raised throughout childhood in an intact two-parent family; whether religion plays an important role in her life; and whether she had a higher family income or lived in a community with high median family income, low male unemployment, and low poverty.

In general, the probability of a first marriage ending in separation or divorce within five years is 20 percent, but the probability of a premarital cohabitation breaking

up within five years is 49 percent. After 10 years, the probability of a first marriage ending is 33 percent, compared with 62 percent for cohabitations.

Marriages that end do not always end in divorce; many end in separation and do not go through the divorce process. Separated white women are much more likely (91 percent) to divorce after three years, compared with separated Hispanic women (77 percent) and separated black women (67 percent).

The probability of remarriage among divorced women was 54 percent in five years - 58 percent for white women, 44 percent for Hispanic women, and 32 percent

for black women. However, there was a likelihood second marriages will end in separation or divorce (23 percent after five years and 39 percent after 10 years).

The likelihood that divorced women will remarry has been declining since the 1950s, when women who divorced had a 65 percent chance of remarrying. Data for 1995 show that women who divorced in the 1980s had only a 50 percent chance of remarrying.

Among white women, the increasing probability of first marriage breakup leveled off in the 1970s but appears to have continued rising for black women through the 1980s.

Investigation

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its investigation, it will turn over its findings to the Forsyth County district attorney, who will determine if charges should be filed.

This will be the second high-profile SBI report that Forsyth County DA Tom Keith will review this year. In May, Keith decided that two Forsyth County sheriff's deputies were justified for using pepper spray, a police dog and a flashlight to subdue a black motorist. The motorist, Nakia Glenn, who was 20 at the time, was in a comatose state for several weeks after the incident. The DA said Glenn's injuries were not caused by the deputies but



Joines

by cocaine use.
Mayor Allen Joines

released a statement Monday asking city residents to remain calm until all the facts of the case come to light.

"I can assure the citizens that the city intends for a full and independent investigation to occur and for all the facts to be reviewed," Joines said. "I have contacted the Grooms family to ask for their patience during the investigation. I have also contacted the Black Leadership Roundtable, the Winston-Salem Ministers Conference and the local NAACP to offer to meet with each of their organizations to hear any concerns."

"Finally, I spoke to Lt. Weaver to let him know we want to quickly receive the facts of the case so as to resolve the issue."

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