



Lafayette College Collaboration By Design

Lafayette College is a private liberal arts college founded in 1826 in Easton, Pennsylvania. The Department of Geology and Environmental Geosciences offers a broad background in the various disciplines of the geosciences. Although the department is housed in a building constructed in 1896, it features state of the art classroom and lab spaces. The newly renovated Petrology Lab is the latest addition.

“The last time the space had been renovated was in the 1970’s,” stated John Wilson, Laboratory Coordinator at Lafayette. “We had no technology at all, and being such actively engaged teachers, we no longer wanted to be limited by such a primitive space.”

The project began with a desire for a simple smart classroom. “We were thinking a computer and a projector,” said Wilson. “But as we got into the design discussions with Vistacom, the ideas starting bouncing around.”

The smart classroom soon developed into the highly collaborative technology space they have today. The class-

room is built around Extron equipment starting with the 10” TLP Pro Touch panel and IPCP Pro controller controlling a XTP Matrix Switcher which routes 18 student microscopes as well as sources from the instructor’s island to student displays connected around the table and two 80” NEC displays at the front of the room. The Leica microscopes are equipped with 5MP HD video cameras that also allow students to connect their BYOD devices wirelessly to capture and annotate images from the microscopes. “The students can connect to the room instantly,” stated Wilson, “They are sharing photos from the field, annotating, the excitement is just evident from the moment they walk in.” The technology has been integrated into the custom oak and granite-topped table built by Jonathan Fallos Cabinetmakers of Easton, PA. “We looked at samples of all your typical lab surfaces and then Jonathan suggested granite,” Wilson said. “Well why stop at one type of granite? We chose 12 unique surfaces to make up the table, which we also incorporate

into some of our labs.”

The table houses all the electronics and wiring, allowing the microscopes and computer screens to be removed from the table surface and tucked into drawers effectively making the technology disappear when not in use.

The integration of the room was a total team collaboration from the beginning. E.J Hudock, Instructional Technology Systems Engineer at Lafayette College was instrumental in development and deployment of the technology. “EJ’s piloting of this project was critical to the successful outcome,” said Rich Mullen, Senior Account Representative at Vistacom. “What was most impressive to me about this project was not just the innovative use of technology, but the way in which Vistacom, ITS, and the Geology Department partnered at every step of the way to make this possible,” stated John O’Keefe, ITS Vice President and Chief Information Officer. “None of this would be possible with out that collaboration.”

“I was very impressed with the seam-

less collaboration between all parties on this project,” stated Kira Lawrence, Associate Professor of Geology. “With so many people involved, and with such a tight deadline to work with, it just spoke to the everyone’s level of professionalism that we were able to accomplish it all in time.”

While the physical changes to the Geology Lab are obvious, the renovation of the lab space has also changed the way the students are learning. “We are tapping into their creativity in a way that just wasn’t possible before,” said Tamara Carley, Assistant Professor at Lafayette. “Understanding the material is one thing,” stated Lawrence. “Being able to take the material and then teach it and explain it to each other, that just takes it to another level.”

“It is the sharing , the constant back and forth, that truly leads to discovery,” said Wilson. “The technology in this room is what is amplifying that discovery.”