

# Professor Sommerich Studies the Impact of Tablet PC Use at Local High School

In 2004, faculty and students from Ohio State were invited to assist Bishop Hartley High School (BHHS) in Columbus to assess the impact of their Tablet PC (TPC) Program. Three years ago, BHHS was the first high school in the U.S. to give an entire class of students their own TPCs on a 24-hour basis. Today, their program is the second largest in the country. The goals for this multi-year project, led by Professor Carolyn Sommerich, are to 1) provide BHHS with periodic, systematic, objective assessments of their program, and 2) develop and test improvement strategies.

It is important that students get on the right track from the start with computing technology, both cognitively and physically. Thus, any improvements to the TPC program will help enhance the students' current and future interactions with computing technology. Because BHHS receives inquiries from around the world about its TPC program, results from this project have the potential to have a wide sphere of influence.

Introduction of this learning modality and its ubiquitous use raises many interesting questions. In the first year of this project, the impact of the program on students' happiness with school, how students used their TPCs, and the physical interactions of students with their TPCs was investigated.

The pilot study, consisting of a survey and other components, was conducted in 2005, as an ISE senior capstone project (ISE 608). In conducting this project, the team of four ISE seniors learned about high school students' TPC use and about conducting research involving children. This required that the ISE students obtain training in research methods involving human subjects and writing a research protocol that would be approved by Ohio State's IRB (the board that oversees human subject research).

From this study, it was found that more than 80% of the BHHS students felt that TPCs made school more enjoyable, and that TPCs were replacing other tools for accomplishing a variety of daily tasks. For example, more students

reported using TPCs for taking notes in class than reported using traditional notebook/paper methods. The organizational benefits afforded by the TPCs were made evident by the greater than 80% agreement from students that it was easier for them to access old lecture notes with their TPCs, easier for them to take notes during class with the TPCs, and that they could easily organize their class notes with their TPCs.

The ISE seniors presented the study at the University's Denman Undergraduate Research Forum. The study has also been submitted to a peer-reviewed journal. Continuing funding is being sought for this project, which will serve as the dissertation topic for ISE graduate student Sahika Vatan Korkmaz.

Ken Collura, Director of School Communication and Instructional Technologies for the Catholic Diocese of Columbus, speaks with Ohio State ISE seniors Julia Payne, Lisa Herman, Kiran Sikdar, and Rich Ward (left to right).

