

Collaboration Among Microsoft, University of Virginia, Thomson and HP Proving Beneficial to Students

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Study Results Show Digital Course Content and Tools Improve Comprehension, Retention and Boost Interest

STAMFORD, Conn., May 2, 2005 /PRNewswire via COMTEX/ -- Digital course materials and tools developed through a groundbreaking alliance between the University of Virginia (UVa), Microsoft Corp. (Nasdaq: MSFT), Hewlett Packard (NYSE, Nasdaq: HPQ) and Thomson Learning, a part of The Thomson Corporation (NYSE: TOC; TSX: TOC) are having a positive impact on learning in the UVa classes taking part in the collaboration according to study results released today, the majority of participating students report that the tools either increased understanding or retention of class content, or stimulated greater interest in coursework.

The results mark the first research findings of a pilot project that was launched at the start of the 2004 academic year aimed at identifying and measuring the value high-tech tools and rich digital content could bring to students and instructors. The first phase of the project involved 362 UVa students enrolled in the College and Graduate School of Arts and Sciences' fall 2004 biochemistry, psychology and statistics classes, as well as their instructors. Students participating in the technology-rich courses provided formal evaluations of the tools and materials and gave predominantly positive feedback on the content, Microsoft(R) OneNote(R) software and the HP Tablet PC 1100. A number of benefits and advantages emerged from the study, including:

- * Digital materials and advanced tools can stimulate students' interest in their courses -- 67 percent of the surveyed students reported an increased interest in the course as a result of using the integrated digital solution.
- * Thomson Learning's online resources helped students understand and retain class material -- on average, 66 percent of students reported that Thomson resources and content improved their understanding of a topic and 62 percent reported Thomson resources improved their ability to retain/remember.
- * Microsoft OneNote note -- taking software had a beneficial impact on learning -- 71 percent of the surveyed students reported an improved ability to understand and remember class content, using the software in class lectures and specially-designed templates as study aids.
- * HP Tablet PCs are valuable additions to course materials -- 83 percent of students viewed the HP Tablet PC as favorable and approximately 80 percent of students used the Tablet PC for applications beyond the pilot class such as note-taking in other classes and e-mail.

"We're always examining ways to reinvent traditional approaches to learning and teaching to better serve our students and bolster their academic performance," said Edward L. Ayers, Dean of Arts and Sciences at UVa. "These results are exciting in that they hint at the value the right combination of advanced technology, content and learning applications can bring to the classroom. Given how dramatically the academic environment has evolved in recent years in terms of how students learn, how faculties teach and how course materials are produced and used, digital learning programs such as the ones we're examining could prove critically important in helping students, faculty and institutions continue to achieve their best and maintain solid footing in a changing environment."

The program combined Thomson's rich library of digital content and e-learning applications with Microsoft OneNote software and HP Tablet PCs, allowing students to take digital handwritten and/or typed notes anywhere on the page, and access the interactive educational platform from any location. In addition, the technology and content package enabled students to collaborate with each other and communicate digitally with their instructor in real time on campus and in wireless classrooms. These fully integrated learning-centered course packages also included animations and simulations, such as three-dimensional models of molecular models and other complex subjects, to facilitate understanding of a given topic.

"The primary goal of the pilots is to identify the innovative educational solutions that best help students and instructors," said Steve Rago, senior vice president, Thomson Learning. "As our customers grow more interested in digital content and tools, we need to explore more options for meeting their needs and providing them with the tools best able to enhance their performance."

To measure the impact of the materials on participants, multiple evaluation measurements were applied, including Internet surveys, focus groups, classroom observations and course evaluations. The data was gathered anonymously to preserve student confidentiality. Faculty also offered pre-semester, mid-semester and post-assessment interviews.

"The positive results of these inventive pilots at UVa clearly demonstrate the value of integrating technology into the college curriculum -- thereby boosting student achievement and transforming the classroom experience," said Cathy Martin, director, Education and Government, HP. "HP is pleased to participate in these collaborative projects with Thomson Learning and Microsoft, bringing our innovative technology solutions for the digital classroom together to better address individual learning styles."

To help guide the development and assessment of the program, each sponsor outlined key educational goals they hoped the program would achieve.

One of Microsoft's primary reasons for participating, in addition to contributing to student achievement, was to understand how technology could be used to expand the classroom experience beyond classroom walls and, possibly, stimulate continual learning. By providing students with access to integrated online resources, both in and outside of the class, Microsoft will be able to gauge technology's role in supporting continual learning. Similarly, by collaborating with Thomson, Microsoft and HP on this pilot, UVa has been able to identify the utility of new materials as well as focus on short-and long- term issues that affect their use in the classroom. These elements will continue to be examined and measured as the project progresses.

"Microsoft works hand in hand with the educational community to foster greater understanding of technology's role in supporting continual learning," said Linda Zecher, vice president of the U.S. Public Sector at Microsoft. "The positive results of these innovative pilot projects tell us we are moving in the right direction and will help open the door to development of even better and more relevant tools to help teachers and students reach their full potential."

As the pilots proceed at UVA and elsewhere, Thomson Learning Labs, based in Stamford, will work closely with academic institutions and business partners to build electronic products that combine high-value content and applications to make institutions more effective, instructors more productive and improve student learning.

These collaborations will involve four-year colleges and universities, two-year community colleges, online distance-education programs and the for-profit post-secondary sector. A key objective will be to measure the educational impact of next-generation tools for teaching and learning.

About University of Virginia

The University of Virginia is distinctive among institutions of higher education. Founded by Thomas Jefferson in 1819, the University sustains the ideal of developing, through education, leaders who are well-prepared to help shape the future of the nation. The University is public, while nourished by the strong support of its alumni. It is also selective; the students who come here have been chosen because they show the exceptional promise Jefferson envisioned. In its 16th annual "America's Best Colleges" issue (August 2003), U.S. News & World Report ranked the University of Virginia the nation's #1 public university (tied with Berkeley) and 21st among all public and private national universities. The College and Graduate School of Arts and Sciences is the largest School of the University, representing 12,000 of the University's 16,000 students, and more than 700 faculty.

About Microsoft

Founded in 1975, Microsoft (Nasdaq: MSFT) is the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that help people and businesses realize their full potential.

About HP

HP is a technology solutions provider to consumers, businesses and institutions globally. The company's offerings span IT infrastructure, global services, business and home computing, and imaging and printing. For the four fiscal quarters ended Jan. 31, 2005, HP revenue totaled \$81.8 billion. More information about HP (NYSE, Nasdaq: HPQ) is available at <http://www.hp.com>.

About The Thomson Corporation

The Thomson Corporation (<http://www.thomson.com>), with 2004 revenues from continuing operations of \$8.10 billion, is a global leader in providing integrated information solutions to business and professional customers. With operational headquarters in Stamford, Conn., Thomson (NYSE: TOC; TSX: TOC) has approximately 40,000 employees and provides services in approximately 130 countries. Its learning businesses and brands serve the needs of individuals, learning institutions, corporations and government agencies with products and services for both traditional and distributed learning.

Research, commissioned by two firms: ReedHaldyMcIntosh Associates of Philadelphia handled the logistics of the research, the student questionnaires and the focus groups and the analysis; the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) of Boulder, CO, compared student outcomes.

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