In the same way computers have changed the way the world does business, the Information Technology Initiative has changed the way Minnesota State University, Mankato College of Business students learn.

Since its inception in the fall of 2000, the Initiative has helped fulfill the College’s mission “to provide programs in a technologically-advanced, active learning environment” by ensuring that all students have the same opportunity and exposure to the technology needed to succeed in today’s business world.

“We have gone through growing pains,” said Assistant to the Dean of the College of Business, Dr. Corinne Dickey. Initially, some students and parents felt the cost of the notebook computers and related fees were too expensive. However, after seeing the benefit of the new style of learning first hand, the same students are the biggest proponents of the initiative.

“One of the students get the notebook computers in their hands, they really like it,” said Dickey.

The I.T. Initiative was conceived in response to comments from community business leaders. According to Dickey, these working professionals told the College of Business faculty they wanted to hire employees who were computer literate and able to prepare PowerPoint presentations and actively use the internet for research and communication.

Dickey says a generous donation from alumnus Allen Lenzenmeyer made the Initiative a reality. “Without him, we probably would not have been able to implement the Initiative as quickly as we did.” This year, Lenzenmeyer’s donation provided more than $30,000 in scholarships for students who are participating in the Initiative.

Under the Initiative, all students entering the College of Business as majors or minors are required to purchase a notebook computer through MSU’s Campus Computer Store or on-line via the COB web site. When the Initiative began in the fall of 2000, 94 students participated with leased IBM Thinkpads. Currently, 1,200 College of Business students are enrolled in laptop classes, using Dell Laptops, complete with all of the hardware and software they will need, as well as a DVD/CD-RW.

Four classrooms in Morris Hall have been remodeled to service I.T. courses. These classrooms are equipped with additional power sources and Smart Boards. An additional five classrooms in Armstrong Hall will be upgraded to I.T. rooms over the 2002 holiday break.

The nine classrooms can each hold up to 36 students, however, an additional large classroom is in the works in Morris Hall. The auditorium-style room will service up to 88 students with power sources in each of the desks. This room will be available for Fall 2003 classes.

In Fall 2003, all COB courses will be taught as laptop courses. However, there will be one section for each of the core courses that will be taught as a non-laptop course. This is to serve students with majors outside the COB who have to take COB courses. These students are not required to purchase a laptop and take part in the Initiative.

Much of the success of the Initiative can be attributed to the work of the faculty. Professors often place notes, instructions and assignments on their web sites, which students can easily access from anywhere on campus with MSU’s wireless technology.

The students, like the professors, work to make the most of the technology. Marketing major Mariah Forman says that the I.T. Initiative helps students master technological skills. “Because of our immersion into a technological world, we can better market ourselves to employers. We have a competitive advantage when job searching, not only because we have the know-how to find thousands of jobs via the Internet in milliseconds, but because we have several technological advantages over other applicants,” she explains. “The bottom line is that I can perform my job with more efficiency than the next person.”

**I.T. Initiative: Bringing Students One Step Closer to the Business World**

Professor Mary Rolfes Takes Full Advantage of the SmartBoard

![Image of Professor Mary Rolfes using a SmartBoard](Image)