“Smart Rooms” gives students smart study space

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POSTED IN: CAMPUS NEWS, NEWS

Photo by Eleanor Segura/ Daily Titan

Having a group project can be a stressful venture since students seem to have limited time on campus and no one knows where to meet up. Until recently, using a group study room at the library was scarce due to the availability of only three rooms.

However, with funds from the University Mission Goals Initiative (UMGI) and renovations done during the summer 2012 semester, four additional group study rooms are now available on the second floor of the Pollak Library.

The proposal was a collaboration between Afsaneh Hamedani, assistant director of user services/call center for the Information and Learning Commons, and Will Breitbach, head of instruction and information services at the Pollak Library.

The concept of the “smart rooms,” which were formerly called equipment group study rooms, were implemented in the Pollak Library in 2006 as a place for small student groups to meet up and work on projects.

“We realized they’re very popular based on statistics and every time they were booked, they were booked,” said Hamedani.

Hamedani said the UMGI funds amounted to about $35,000, which was spent on creating the four new rooms on the second floor of the library.

The rooms were originally each equipped with a PC, a Mac, a television and a lectern (an overhead projector-like device), which are meant to provide students with various means to finish their work.

Information Technology Services network analyst Sepehr Sobhani said the technology that the smart rooms tout also condenses equipment by hooking up both the PC and Mac to the wall-mounted television, which takes away the use of two screens for each computer.

“The new rooms basically we have a Mac mini, which is a very small Mac,” said Sobhani. “And we have a PC and...
we both connect them to the TV basically. Unlike the (group study rooms) on the first floor, it used to be connected to the projector… it’s very compact and it’s very practical.”

Additionally, both the Mac mini and PC use a wireless mouse and keyboard for ease of use throughout the entire study room.

The “smart rooms” also use smart technology to ensure that there is no trespassing in the study group rooms, by use of a wireless key card lock. The lock on the door can be opened using a student’s TitanCard and will only work during the time a student is registered to use the room.

“The card swipe system that we have is brand new, I believe,” said Sobhani. “It was fairly cheap compared to the one that is connected to the wire because someone has to wire it.”

Furthermore, Sobhani also noted that the system itself has been in place by CSUF for some time, but the locks on the “smart rooms” are innovative since they require less construction due to the card readers being wireless.

“The system that we have is already in place by (the) TitanCard office. That’s very important because it actually saves a lot of money for us; instead of setting up a brand new system from the server,” said Sobhani. “It’s very innovative because it’s all wireless so you don’t have to do a lot of construction.”

The use of these locks were not only cost effective, but also innovative since the rooms can be monitored via the key card lock which would then take away the need of hiring additional staff.

“We came up with the idea of having door swipes on the doors so we don’t need to send anybody upstairs,” said Hamedani. “So we didn’t need to add any human resources to our operation or any service desk to make four additional rooms operational and I guess that’s why our proposal won.”

IT consultant Torin Truong also noticed that the smart rooms are very popular and reservations for the rooms tend to be booked quite regularly.

“It’s actually been pretty busy starting between midterms and once it gets to finals, it gets really busy,” said Truong.

Reservations for the group study “smart rooms” can be made up to a week in advance either in person or online.

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About Raymond Mendoza

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