TOP-TEC Case Study:

National Louis University, Chicago Campus

Computer Science & Information Systems (CSIS) Learning Lab
The university is committed to providing their students with the best and most modern facilities available, and had recently secured funds to develop a brand-new learning space. The project involved redeveloping one of their old classrooms, located in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) department, into a new fit-for-purpose ‘CSIS Learning Lab’.

TOP-TEC were approached by Joel Hanshaw, Technical Lead on the project, after discovering our Technical Furniture solutions online. He was immediately impressed with our pedigree and experience in providing Active Learning and Collaborative Suites and was keen to find out more about our AV integrated solutions.

The Brief

From the very start of the project, Joel’s primary objective was to encourage students to learn using different types of technology, giving them a choice of where and how to work. He also wanted to introduce Active Learning methods to the university to encourage collaboration and enhance student engagement.

The new learning lab would need to provide space for up to 32 users, made up of smaller groups of approximately 4-6 students. Each collaborative table would also need enough worktop space for four all-in-one PC units.

The Solution

Since the initial engagement, Joel expressed a keen interest in our Synergy Collaborative range. He was impressed with how the tables encouraged collaboration between students and promoting eye contact and engagement. He saw them as an ideal solution for implementing Active Learning methods into the new learning lab. Joel was especially interested in the rounded Teardrop table shape, and appreciated its ability to encourage
collaboration and interaction between all users. Following these discussions, TOP-TEC produced a series of 2D and 3D room-layouts for the university to choose from, all featuring the Teardrop tables. Utilising our experience in Active Learning suites, each layout was designed to fully maximise the use of the space.

Having decided on a final room-layout, the university installed a series of TOP-TEC Synergy Teardrop tables providing room for up to 32 students. Each workspace featured room for four all-in-one PC’s with a keyboard and mouse, a secure 55” screen mount and customised data connections in the mast. Each PC can be connected to the larger screen at the head of the table, enabling students to cast their work for group discussion.

A 6-seat Reuleaux workspace table was also supplied and placed in the centre of the room, allowing students and lecturers to connect one-to-one or as a group away from the collaborative tables. The Reuleaux table provided a completely separate space within the room to give students and teachers an increased choice of where and how to work.

During the initial project discussions Joel was shown several of our recent case studies, including a large 100-seat collaborative classroom solution at Leeds University Business School (see case study here). He liked the idea of colour co-ordinating each table to help easily identify separate groups and teams within the room.

Following this, Joel sent us a range of colour swatches that he wanted to incorporate into the new learning lab. TOP-TEC then successfully colour matched each suggestion, incorporating them into the Synergy edge-banding and seating upholstery. This showcases our flexibility in offering a range of standard and non-standard colour
options to fully achieve the customers desired outcome.

One of the main challenges TOP-TEC faced when undertaking this project was the task of exporting our furniture all the way to Chicago in the United States of America. Having recently supplied a classroom full of workspace desks to the University of Hong Kong, our dedicated National Installations Manager was confident he could arrange this delivery on time and on budget. This demonstrates our ability to provide and install technical furniture solutions to universities anywhere around the globe.

**The Result**

Since it’s launch earlier this year, the brand-new CSIS Learning Lab has been well received by students and teachers alike. The use of integrated technology within the learning lab has helped implement Active Learning methods into the classroom, resulting in increased student engagement.

The Synergy Teardrop Collaborative Tables have also received some extremely positive feedback. The shape of the worktop, alongside the integrated 55” screen at the head of the table, have all helped encourage collaboration and interaction between students.

The university were especially excited about the bright colours within the new learning lab, creating a space that is enjoyable to work in and one that well represents the high standards expected within National Louis University.
“From our initial engagement all the way through to installation, Dalen have been brilliant every step of the way. Their attention to detail in all aspects of the project; such as 2D/3D room plans, connectivity in the table and colour options, have been invaluable in bringing the CSIS laboratory to life. Utilising their expertise in Active Learning solutions in the UK, we were able to work together to create a space specific to our requirements.

Since it’s launch at the start of the Fall term, the lab is being primarily used as a home for the new CSIS program, and we have received some extremely positive feedback from the students & teachers who have been using the space. As we continue to develop more learning spaces throughout the University, we are definitely going to keep Dalen in mind and would not hesitate to work with them again.”

Joel Hanshaw
Technical Lead, CSIS
National Louis University, Chicago Campus
TOP-TEC is a brand of Dalen Limited
Valepits Road
Garretts Green
Birmingham, B33 0TD

T: +44(0)121 783 3838
E: sales@top-tec.co.uk
W: www.top-tec.co.uk