

SCSU's world goes 3-D

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The first 3-D scanner in the state is giving St. Cloud State University's environment and technology students a spot on the front line of technology.

The school's Department of Environmental and Technology Studies purchased a Z Corp. 3-D scanner and printer this summer.

The equipment will have multiple uses and benefits for the students and the school. While it's intended to help students graduate with the latest knowledge, the department also sees uses for area businesses and high schools.

"We see the equipment as an opportunity for students to work with new technology and a chance for us to partner with local business," said Kurt Helgeson, the department chair. "We are also looking to make it available to the local K-12 schools."

The \$140,000 scanner and printer combination lets students turn ideas and concepts into real objects, Helgeson said.

The technology can be used to create new designs for products such as cell phones and tennis shoes.

Students also can measure an object in 3-D instead of using the time-consuming manual measuring. It gives them more accurate measurements, said James Nicholson, a professor in the ETS department.

After scanning, students can transfer the data to a computer and work from there to modify the product before printing it.

The printer takes what was drawn in a computer drafting and design program, or information from the scanner directly, and builds the 3-D model layer by layer.

Having the skills to use that technology will make students more marketable when they get into the workplace, Helgeson said.

The technology also lets St. Cloud State students work directly with a company on a project, and gives the company access to the technology and the students.

Fisher Beavertail, a boat manufacturer in Avon, used the scanner two months ago to see how it could make a larger or smaller version of a boat.

"It was user friendly," said Mark Fisher, the president and CEO of Fisher Beavertail. "It did a very nice job."



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Kurt Helgeson, department chair of St. Cloud State University's Environmental and Technological Studies program, shows a full-color, three-dimensional model of a home Thursday. It was created with a special scanner and printer.

Mark Weimer teaches Introduction to Engineering Design to 50 students in two sections at Apollo High School.

His students right now are using 3-D software, he said. He plans to take students on field trips to St. Cloud State to experience the technology.

“I hope to bring out Apollo High School soon and try it out on something,” he said.

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