

## Pioneering Next-Gen Classroom Technologies

When demand for game design courses at George Mason University exceeded the limits of physical classroom space, Scott Martin, founding director of Mason's Computer Game Design Program, was faced with a serious dilemma. He knew Mason would have to expand into virtual classrooms, but he felt the current online education systems lacked the real-time interactions of physical classroom settings.

To remedy the situation, Martin and colleague James Casey came together to form Scriyb LLC, a cutting-edge education platform that allows students and teachers to interact virtually with each other in real time and uses algorithms to maintain an ideal classroom balance.

In September, Martin and colleagues, including their new Scriyb CEO Chris Etesse, were recognized by the *Washington Business Journal* with a 2016 Innovator Award for their efforts.

Scriyb's machine-learning algorithms monitor the students' achievements and sort the students into groups based on their academic performances, virtual communication personalities, and social tendencies. This maintains a balance between high achievers, middle achievers, and low achievers, so that there are enough middle

and high achievers to assist classmates who are struggling to keep up.

Chatting among students, and communication between groups of students, is expected during class, says Martin.

While live testing of Scriyb began last summer at Mason, interest from other educators has grown quickly. More than 80 prospective clients are expected to begin using the software platform soon. About half of Scriyb's prospective clients are in higher education, with a quarter in K-12 education, and the remaining quarter in business education.

—Arthur Wesley



## DID YOU KNOW...

Environmental Science and Policy professor Lee Talbot received two lifetime achievement awards in 2016—the Harold Jefferson Coolidge Medal from the International Union for Conservation of Nature, and the Legacy Award from the Defenders of Wildlife. One of the original authors of the Endangered Species Act, Talbot has advised on environmental issues in 134 countries. He was chief scientist and foreign affairs director of the President's Council on Environmental Quality under Presidents Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Jimmy Carter.

