

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA AT LAFAYETTE

STEP Committee

Technology Fee Application

Improving Wi-Fi in Mouton Hall

Title

**Kristen Kahanek, Nathan
Carrington and Allen Latour**

Name of Submitter
(Faculty or Staff Only)

SOCI; ANTH; HDFS; POLS

Organization

Title: Improving the WiFi in Mouton Hall Date: 1/16/2024
Name (Contact Person): Allen Latour
Address: Griffin Hall Room 101
Phone Number: 337-482-5485 Email: Allen@louisiana.edu
Department/College/Org: College of Liberal Arts

ABSTRACT (250 words or less):

Funding received from this grant will improve the Wi-Fi network in Mouton Hall. Home to the Departments of Sociology, Anthropology, Human Family & Developmental Science and Political Science. These upgrades will improve learning experiences for hundreds of students enrolled in those degree programs as well as thousands of other students completing College of Liberal Arts and GenEd degree requirements regularly offered in the building.

The Wi-Fi in Mouton Hall is poor-quality with several dead zones impairing student learning and faculty approaches to teaching. Faculty have reported slow load times on student devices during in-class activities requiring the Internet. Consequently, faculty have altered lesson plans to avoid these types of activities when classes are held in Mouton Hall. This provides a different learning environment for students than if the classes were taught in a building with better Wi-Fi connectivity. Simultaneously, some faculty are switching to online-administered exams for in-person classes to reduce student costs on supplies and protecting services. However, the absence of consistent, speedy internet makes these exams risky and unreliable. Faculty are increasingly attempting to incorporate usage of the Internet into class pedagogy but are unable to do so due to the poor-quality Wi-Fi.

The improvements facilitated by this grant will prevent the issues being seen by improving the speed of Wi-Fi through the building (via the replacing and upgrading of hardwire connections and switches) while installing additional access points for student devices in classrooms and hallways. Such upgrades are projected to meet the needs of students for the next 5-7 years, which is the lifespan of the equipment. The improvements will be conducted and coordinated by the College of Liberal Arts Technology Support Staff and managed by UL's department of Information and Media Networks.

I. Purpose of Grant and Impact to Student Body as a Whole

The purpose of this grant is to improve the Wi-Fi in and around Mouton Hall. Mouton Hall is home to several departments and degree programs, including the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Human Development & Family Sciences, and the Department of Political Science. In addition to declared majors and minors, there are thousands of students regularly take courses in Mouton Hall as part of completing GenEd requirements.

Bachelor of Arts in Sociology – The Sociology Program consists of approximately 100 majors, with that expecting to increase over time with the proposal of a Concentration in Social Work that is expected to begin in the Fall 2023 semester. Additionally, we have a large number of students who are minoring in Sociology to complement their major. There are several courses taught in Sociology that meet the GenEd and/or College of Liberal Arts degree requirements and attract hundreds of students from across

the university each academic year from various departments and programs. Two of these classes are Introduction to Sociology (SOC1 100), and Contemporary Social Problems (SOC1 241). These two courses usually have between 5 and 6 sections in the Fall and Spring semesters, with a minimum of 45 students per section. There are approximately 30-40 different classes and sections taught a semester for this program. As part of the regular offering of sociology courses, especially classes like the research methods classes and labs (SOC1 308/309), students routinely need to have access to online resources like textbooks, Moodle, academic journal articles, news articles, quizzes, and exams, and so forth.

Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology – The Anthropology Program has approximately 50 majors. This program also has a number of students who are minoring in Anthropology to enhanced experiences with their major. There are several courses taught within Anthropology that meet the GenEd and/or College of Liberal Arts degree requirements and attract students from various programs at the university each academic year. Intro to Anthropology (ANTH 100) and Cultural Anthropology (ANTH 201) are two courses that each usually have between 3 and 4 sections, with a minimum of 45 students per section. Additionally, there are approximately 15-25 different classes and sections taught a semester for this program. These courses are taught in-person, online, or hybrid.

Bachelor of Science in Human Development and Family Sciences – The Human Development and Family Sciences program is home to approximately 175 majors. This program also has a large number of students who are minoring in HDFS to gain additional experiences that will be beneficial to their major. Diverse Families (HDFS 201) and Human Sexuality (HDFS 243) both meet the GenEd and/or College of Liberal Arts degree requirements and attract a number of students from across various programs and departments in the university each academic year. These courses are taught consistently and each usually has 3 sections, with a minimum of 45 students per section. Additionally, HDFS 370 is a research methods class that utilizes technology in the classroom. There are approximately 30-40 different classes and sections taught a semester for this program. These courses are taught in various modalities, whether in-person, online, or hybrid.

Bachelor of Arts in Political Science – The Political Science department consists of approximately 200 majors spread across three-degree concentrations: pre-law (the largest concentration), international relations, and a standard political science concentration. In addition to serving majors, several courses taught in the political science department meet GenEd and College of Liberal Arts degree requirements and attract hundreds of students from across the university each year. Such classes include U.S. National Government (POLS110/111); American Politics and Policy (POLS210); World Politics (220); Louisiana Government (POLS313); and State and Local Government (POLS317). All of these courses are taught in multiple modalities, whether in-person, online, or hybrid. As part of political science courses, students routinely access online resources like textbooks, policy briefs, legislative enactments, academic journal articles, news articles, quizzes, and exams, and the lack of reliable Wi-Fi in the building has been shown to result in changes to classroom instruction by faculty. As one example, professors have attempted to implement online exams for in-person classes to reduce costs to students (on BlueBooks and Scantron forms, for example). However, students report difficulties connecting to the Wi-Fi on their devices and troubleshooting takes time away from the exam. Improving the Wi-Fi would not only help the hundreds of majors housed in the Department of Political Science but also the hundreds of students from across campus who routinely complete GenEd requirements in the department.

Within all of these programs is the common theme: the inconsistent and often unreliable access of the Wi-Fi in Mouton Hall obstructs and discourages the use of technology in the classroom and hinders students from being able to reliably work on their assignments in the building. In addition, it reaches beyond simply the class time in the classroom, as we often see students who are enrolled in fully online, or hybrid courses regularly sit in Mouton Hall and try to complete the coursework, or exams for those courses. Regardless of the class, it is very common for students to routinely need to access online resources like textbooks, Moodle, academic journal articles, news articles, quizzes, and exams, and so forth. As with the example given in the Political Science description, other professors in Sociology, Anthropology and Human Development & Family Science have similarly attempted to implement online coursework, check participation in the classroom, or offer online exams for in-person classes to reduce costs to students on physical exam materials, or costly proctoring services. However, students report difficulties connecting to the Wi-Fi on their devices and troubleshooting takes time away from the exam, or the class time activity. In some cases, manually taking attendance in an 80-student classroom because of unpredictable Wi-Fi for devices to detect and register attendance.

Improving the Wi-Fi would not only help the hundreds of majors housed in Mouton Hall but also the nearly thousand students from across campus who routinely complete GenEd requirements in the building each semester. The lack of reliable Wi-Fi in Mouton Hall has resulted in changes being made to classroom instruction by faculty members. At times, there are requests from faculty to move classes into a building with better Wi-Fi access. It is our ultimate desire to see the improvement of the Wi-Fi, as it would also mean a consistent experience for students who are taking these courses.

II. Projected Lifetime of Enhancement

With normal use and maintenance, this upgrade should last a minimum of 5-7 years and should only require upgrades as technology improves and programs grow.

III. Responsible Persons

The UL department of Information and Media Networks will oversee the implementation of the network upgrades, insuring they meet Industry standards.

IV. Justification

The justification for this proposal is included in the narrative (above) and within the budget proposal below. The equipment needs and budget were prepared by UL's Information and Media Networks.

Budget Proposal

1.	Equipment	\$ 36,000 - New Fiber connection, Wireless Access Points, and Switches to support Wireless and Wired Devices.
2.	Software	\$
3.	Supplies	\$
4.	Maintenance	\$
5.	Personnel	\$ 19,000 Licensed Vendor to install and test the equipment.
6.	Other	\$
TOTAL:		\$ 55,000

V. Previously Funded STEP Projects

Allen Latour

- Spring 2023: Communication Department Mac Lab Update
- Fall 2022: Improving Wi-Fi in Burke-Hawthorne Hall
- Spring 2022: V.L. Wharton Hall Editing Suite Computer Replacement and Distance Learning Access
- Summer 2020: Burke-Hawthorn Hall Computer Lab Computer Replacement for Remote Learning
- Spring 2019: Audio Online Instruction and Annex Wireless Access Point
- Fall 2018: Two SMART Classrooms for the Department of English
- Fall 2018: H.L. Griffin 106 Computer Classroom PC Replacement
- Spring 2018: Two SMART Classrooms for the Department of English
- Spring 2018: HLG 106 & 307 SMART Transformation
- Fall 2017: Two SMART Classrooms for the Department of English
- Fall 2017: Cognitive PSYC Instructional & Experimental Lab Upgrade
- Spring 2017: HLG 315 SMART Transformation
- Spring 2017: Modern Languages (MODL) TEC Classrooms
- Spring 2017: Smart Classroom Equipment for HL Griffin 422 Auditorium
- Spring 2017: Two SMART Classrooms for the Dept. of English
- Fall 2016: Burke-Hawthorne Hall 250 Classroom PC Computer and Printer Replacement,
- Fall 2016: V. L. Wharton Hall 213 Classroom PC Computer Replacement
- Fall 2016: Two SMART Classrooms For the Dept. of English
- Fall 2016: MODL TEC Classrooms
- Spring 2016: Communication Department Mac Lab Update
- Spring 2016: History, Geography and Philosophy TEC Classrooms
- Fall 2015: Completion of SMART Classroom Technology in Burke Hawthorne Hall
- Spring 2015: New PSYC Instructional, Testing, & Experimental Lab Upgrade
- Fall 2014: H.L. Griffin 307 Computer Classroom PC Replacement
- Fall 2014: PSYC Instructional, Testing, and Experimental Lab
- Spring 2013: FGM 101 Interactive Classroom Enhancement