

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA AT LAFAYETTE

STEP Committee

Technology Fee Application

MODL Language Lab (HLG 109) PC Replacement

Title

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Name of Submitter
(Faculty or Staff Only)

Department of Modern Languages / College of Liberal Arts

Organization

Title: MODL Language Lab (HLG 109) PC Replacement

Date: January 15, 2024

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ABSTRACT (250 words or less):

This grant seeks to replace the 40 outdated PCs in the Language Resource Center/Language Lab (HLG 109) with 15 new PC towers for student workstations, one for the podium/projector, and one for the check-in desk. Current monitors and speakers will be reused; only the computer towers are requested in this proposal. New computers are essential to the functioning of the Language Lab because the current computers run Windows 10 and cannot be upgraded to Windows 11 when Microsoft ends support for Windows 10 in 2025. Textbook publishers have moved to online platforms for foreign language textbooks, including eBooks, practice exercises such as homework, and assessments. All students enrolled in French, German, and Spanish 101, 102, and 201, and students in some sections of 202 are required to purchase access to an online platform or otherwise need internet access for their language courses. Given this requirement, it is essential that we offer access to a certain number of computers for students who may not have other online access to complete their coursework. The student workstation computers are also necessary for Advanced Credit Exam testing conducted every semester. These placement tests are important to ensure that students are enrolled at the proper level, and they also permit students to earn credits for classes that they test out of. Updating the PCs in the Language Lab would be of great benefit to incoming students during orientation, all of the 800+ students enrolled in language courses each semester, and instructors of all MODL courses.

Description of Proposal

The Language Lab (formerly Language Resource Center) offers computer access and free tutoring for UL Lafayette students enrolled in French, German, and Spanish courses at all levels. Beginning students may use the computers in the lab to complete their online required homework, whereas more advanced students use the lab computers for research and writing assignments. The computers are also used for Advanced Credit Exams in Languages conducted as a part of Orientation every semester; the opportunity to test out of beginning courses saves time and money for students who already have experience in a foreign language. The current PCs in the Language Lab were installed in Fall 2014, and they are reaching the end of their functional lifetime. This grant seeks to replace the 40 outdated PCs in the Language Resource Center/Language Lab (HLG 109) with 15 new PC towers for student workstations, one for the podium/projector, and one for the check-in desk (for a total of 17 new computers). Current monitors and speakers will be reused; only the computer towers are requested in this proposal. New computers are essential to the functioning of the Language Lab, because the current computers run Windows 10, which will no longer be supported in 2025, and they cannot support Windows 11.

a. Purpose of grant and impact to student body as a whole

Knowledge of a second language can improve the competitiveness of candidates on the job market in many fields. An improved foreign language experience could encourage students within and beyond the College of Liberal Arts to pursue advanced second language skills (possibly even committing to a minor or major) and thus reflect positively on UL Lafayette in terms of graduate marketability.

New Student Orientation:

The Language Lab computers are essential for placement testing, because they are used for the Advanced Credit Exam in Languages conducted as a part of Orientation every semester. At the beginning of each semester, our faculty also offers testing sessions to administer the placement exam to students who did not already take the test. Placement tests are important to ensure that students are enrolled at the proper level, and they also permit students to earn credits for classes that they test out of. The opportunity to test out of beginning courses saves time and money for students who already have experience in a foreign language. Currently, the age and condition of the computers makes setup and testing slow and often problematic. Faster functional PCs would allow testing to proceed more quickly and thus this part of the orientation sequence and early semester testing would run more smoothly for test administrators and test takers.

College of Liberal Arts and Department of Modern Languages:

Given that all majors in Liberal Arts have a language course requirement, an updated facility would improve this aspect of the liberal arts education program. Textbook publishers have moved to online platforms for foreign language textbooks, including eBooks, practice exercises such as homework, and assessments. All students enrolled in French and Spanish 101, 102, and 201 (up to approximately 700 per semester), and students in some sections of 202 (up to 100 per semester) are required to purchase access to an online platform for their language courses. Up to 50 German students per semester also need regular internet access for their course materials. Given this requirement for a total of up to 800+ students, it is essential that we offer access to a certain number of computers for students who may not have other online access to complete their coursework. The Language Lab also offers a quiet location with in-house support (Graduate Assistants who offer tutoring) for students to focus on their work and obtain help if they require it. Our current PCs already do not offer a particularly effective experience for students who need to use them, and these computers will become non-functional within a year because they cannot be upgraded to the newest Windows system required in 2025.

Teaching Assistants in Modern Languages complete a portion of their duties as Assistants in the Language Lab, where they hold their office hours and offer tutoring and help to students in language courses. The Language Lab computers often serve as their main access point for class-related communication and for class preparation; reliable computers are essential for both.

Access to authentic samples of foreign languages - offered within the online platforms used for our courses as well as in person by our Graduate Assistants - is a relevant factor in engaging students in second-language learning. For advanced students, the Language Lab (with functioning computers) provides a place to work on papers with Graduate Students present to offer assistance if needed. This access is of great benefit to students who need extra support as they embark on learning a foreign language as well as students who seek to refine their knowledge at more advanced levels with the help of online resources and more advanced speakers.

The Language Lab offers a convenient place to show foreign-language films and other visual content for groups of students in the context of courses or otherwise. The PC connected to the projector needs to be upgraded, since it cannot be updated, to continue to use the Language Lab for such activities.

b. Projected lifetime of enhancement

The grant is expected to have a lifetime of at least 5 years.

c. Person responsible for Implementation, Installation, Maintenance, and Operation

Allen M. Latour, Director of Instructional Technology for the College of Liberal Arts, and Austin Champagne, Technology Support Specialist for the College of Liberal Arts, will be responsible for the implementation, installation, maintenance, and operation of the new technology.

Previous funded STEP projects

In Fall 2014, MODL received STEP funding of \$63,470.00 for the MODL Language Resource Center Replacement proposal. This funding was for 40 standard desktop computers, updated networking, improved workstations, and a LaserJet printer. The computers obtained through that grant are now 10 years old and approaching obsolescence because they cannot be upgraded to Windows 11 when Microsoft ends support for Windows 10 in 2025.

Budget Proposal

1. Equipment \$16,150.00

17 Computer Towers : 17 x \$950.00 = **\$16,150.00**

Justification : 15 new PCs for student workstations are needed for daily use and for Language Placement Testing ; a computer for the podium and one for the check-in desk will insure the smooth functioning of the Language Lab.

2. Software \$0

3. Supplies \$0

4. Maintenance \$0

5. Personnel \$0

6. Other \$0

TOTAL: \$16,150.00