UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA AT LAFAYETTE

STEP Committee

Technology Fee Application

Burke-Hawthorne Hall Computer Lab Computer Replacement for Remote Learning

Title

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Name of Submitter
(Faculty or Staff Only)

Department of Communication

Organization

Title: Burke-Hawthorne Hall Computer Lab Computer Replacement for Remote Learning   Date: 07-21-2020

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ABSTRACT (250 words or less):

The objective of this application is to purchase 19 Apple computers for students at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette to meet the requirement of working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. The new hardware will address the demands of a shifting workflow, especially in terms of video production, graphic design, and multi-media journalism. The proposal plans for CMCN professors/instructors to work alongside graduate assistants in the SMART computer lab in Burke-Hawthorne Hall 140. In that space, students will be able to exercise the necessary option of doing their training in-person (with social distancing) or via remote online instruction. The Communication Department has maintained Apple-based workstations since 2012, now beyond their prescribed five-year lifespan. Apple has advised operators of these units that technical support for their maintenance is to be discontinued in October 2020. This withdrawal of support will render the Apple workstations obsolete and the computer lab useless. If allowed to continue in service, certain structural and content hazards, including viruses and IP issues, are likely to occur and will have to be removed from the university's network. Thus, workstation replacement is necessary and is made imperative by the required reliance on in-class and remote instruction.

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

The unprecedented and unforeseen pandemic—COVID-19—has quickly initiated the inevitable transition to online instruction at all stages and phases of education. University adaptation was already engaged in remote learning through distant instruction in the virtual sphere of learning. Now circumstances have accelerated the practicality of online instruction as the traditional face-to-face classroom experience is problematic and the dangerous threat of viral transmission requires this solution.

Precautionary measures taken by the online pivot during the spring semester 2020 gave rise to online ingenuity from professors and instructors. In our major of communication, digital face time became the first alternative to avoid the spread of the virus, followed by Zoom and Microsoft Teams as preferred applications. Within weeks of implementation, professors began to familiarize themselves with options enabling them to share their desktop interface with students, including specific files for video tutorials using an MP4 video format and the familiar use of Power Point slides to structure lectures in an organized fashion through screen sharing as a suitable alternative. Innovations in pedagogy included both formats of delivery and a subtle reconditioning of the student's learning-aptitude through the new digital mechanisms.

The instruction of communication remains reliant on the optics and sonic delivery of digital messages, because a student still must learn their craft and professional discipline from seasoned experts—even in a virtual world. Burke-Hawthorne Hall 140 is well suited for SMART classroom reconfiguration for video education: instruction in videography and editing via workstations improves the skills of electronic media, public relations, cinema arts, and journalism. The proposal would equip this space to be rebooted as a creative laboratory and becoming a Media Production Command Center for two programs where live instruction sessions and tutorials can be effectively transmitted via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and other computer-based video communication tools.

The Department of Communication collaborates with the Moving Image Arts major (Department of English), with five CMCN/MIA professors and instructors adept at teaching video editing skills who would benefit from this acquisition. The Communication program also has qualified graduate students who could offer live software tutorials during lab hours. The G.A.s would primarily assist outside of class-time by offering open computer hours and be available online, not just in person. The trained graduate assistant would set-up a virtual time and space where editing or graphic design is taught and the student becomes competently trained in computer media software. These workstations would remove certain obstacles impeding on students' goals by helping them to enter the media industry competitive with their skillset. As noted, Zoom and Microsoft Teams would be the two main vessels to ignite their careers, but this proposal anticipates additional applications. The learning capacity of our pupils and the acuity of our faculty in this area allows for the appropriation of this equipment to harness remote learning.

Creating an environment where new avenues of instruction can take place in person and online—simultaneously—is the next step in our practicum of knowledge. Taking precaution during this pandemic means part of the class will attend the lecture in person, while another part will join from their laptop or mobile device. The hybrid of remote and present teaching invites this discourse and aptitude.

In terms of facilities, three different software apps —Adobe Elements (which includes Photoshop

Elements), Adobe Creative Suite and Final Cut Pro X – are currently in use in the Burke-Hawthorne 140 computer lab. Students would have the option to choose the software (all three have reasonable student pricing), while Final Cut Pro X is available in Burke-Hawthorne Hall Room 140. Nineteen licenses for accompanying Apple computers are required.

In 2012, the Department of Communication obtained 30 Apple computers purchased with a Board of Regents Support Fund (BoRSF) grant. As noted, Apple will discontinue technical support for these facilities in October 2020. This development requires a prompt response since the workstations are past their point of expiration, which occurs during the fifth year. Because 19 of the 30 Apple computers are housed in Burke Hawthorne Hall 140, it would serve as the initial space of operation. Those units have reached the point where they cannot accept updated software. Again, the hazard of computers susceptible to viruses with the threat of rendering them out of commission cannot be ignored and technicians will be forced to remove the outdated computers from the university's network.

The Media Production Command Center envisioned here can become fully operational if the University of Louisiana at Lafayette first replaces the current 19 Apple Computers in Burk-Hawthorne Hall 140. Of immediate benefit, the purchase would serve multiple media majors in necessary training for video production, layout and graphic design, advanced editing and multi-media journalism. In view of the launch of Cypress Lake Wire news hub (under the auspices of the Journalism professors/instructors; and, in collaboration with the local National Public Radio affiliate—KRVS), Burke-Hawthorne Hall 140 would be able to facilitate enterprise stories remotely. Journalism is expanding beyond the print realm, and students need the resources from SMART lab instructors to produce the audio-visual component of their reporting. Other reasons indicate why Burke-Hawthorne Hall 140 is so well-suited to be equipped with the latest hardware and software proposed in this application.

At the classroom level, Broadcasting and Moving Image Arts students produce three-to-four video projects per semester using Burke-Hawthorne Hall 140. While students from Public Relations and Advertising also benefit from the SMART lab once their portfolios draw upon video components with motion graphics. The seating availability for courses that would benefit from Burke-Hawthorne Hall 140 would serve an estimated 160 students via remote and in person delivery every semester. Recent enrollment numbers, indicate 45% of our communication students would benefit from this SMART lab of 19 computers.

Also as noted, the facilities are fully licensed with the editing software Final Cut Pro X—which is regularly updated (no annual subscription required). Yet this cost savings is contingent on having computers that will facilitate the software updates also provided through this proposed acquisition. This lifeline of 19 workstation acquisitions is even more critical for this reason and others.

Finally, opening this computer lab to a virtual online experience will enhance students' aptitude to learn live-production skills using their smartphone or mobile device – and that will change the learning dynamic to fully adapt to a media industry that has universally embraced media consumption on-the-go. Mobile media production has reached its innovative takeoff point and the resource upgrades proposed in Burke-Hawthorne Hall Room 140 will be the learning bridge students can cross visually and virtually.

Projected Lifetime of Enhancement: 5- 6 years.

Person(s) responsible for

>   **Implementation**: Dr. Michael Gervais, Chief Engineer for the Department of Communication and Allen Latour, Laboratory Technician for the College of Liberal Arts.

>   **Installation:** Michael Gervais, Chief Engineer for the Department of Communication and Allen Latour, Laboratory Technician for the College of Liberal Arts.

>   **Maintenance:** Michael Gervais, Chief Engineer for the Department of Communication and Allen Latour, Laboratory Technician for the College of Liberal Arts.

>   **Operation:** Department of Communication students and faculty will use the computers. In addition, students from other departments as well as undergraduates choose certain production courses as their communication elective.

>   **Training (with qualification):** Not Applicable

Discuss all previous funded STEP projects: In Fall of 2016, the Department of Communication updated Burke-Hawthorne Hall Classroom 250 with PC Computer and Printer Replacement. In addition, to the SPSS Software Renewal and Vision Pro Software Installation. The amount awarded was $23,5000. In Spring of 2019, the Department of Communication was awarded two grants in the amount of $20,000 for Audio Online Instruction and Annex Wireless Access Point (in order to provide internet services for audio production classes being taught in there). In addition, $2, 235.00 was awarded for the Phantom 4 Pro Maintenance (warranty for video production drones – used by both Communication and Moving Image Arts students).

Budget Proposal

1. **Equipment**   **$35,131: 19 industry standard 21.5-inch iMac with Retina 4K display. 3.0GHZ 6-core 8th-generation Intel Core i5 processor, Turbo Boost up to 4.1 GHz. 16GB 2666MHz DDR4 Onboard Memory. 512 GB SSD storage. Radeon Pro 560X with 4GB GDDR5 memory.**

     $3,211: AppleCare+ for iMac for the 19 computers.

2. **Software** $

3. **Supplies** $

4. **Maintenance** $

5. **Personnel** $

6. **Other** $

TOTAL: **$ 38,342**