

Tiffany Wells: Proposal for Laptop Loaner Program at Clayton State University

Executive Summary

The purpose of our proposal is to request funding to start a semester-long laptop loaner program for students at Clayton State University. The Laptop Loaner Program aims to help students access the technology needed for their success.

As of the 2021-2022 financial aid year, the average Clayton State University student comes from a family with an Adjusted Gross Income of \$29,020 per year. An income of \$29,020 is considered below the poverty line for a family of four, this income can make it challenging to afford things outside of necessities causing many students to experience a lack of technology, and in turn, the student may not pass their courses and may not graduate from college.

A college education for many students is a way to get a higher income and achieve social mobility. Social mobility is the change in a person's socio-economic situation. However, a college diploma is difficult to achieve, not only because classes are difficult, but also because of the expensive costs of being a college student.

Introduction

The student sighed and admitted, "I can't get a new laptop yet." They were failing their math class because the Chromebook they used did not support Lockdown browser, preventing them from taking quizzes and tests, ultimately leading to them failing the course. Sadly, this student's predicament is not unique, as many students at Clayton State University face similar challenges due to financial constraints. Stories of homelessness, food insecurity, and the inability to afford needed technology are all too common among our student body.

Many students at Clayton State University use Chromebooks. Chromebooks are affordable laptops that many students use in high school, but when transitioning to higher education these Chromebooks lack the capabilities of certain software. This means students cannot access software and extensions needed to complete assignments. What makes matters worse is how we at Clayton State University provide Chromebooks for students to use and we ultimately fail to meet our students' needs, inadvertently undermining their chances of success and social mobility.

An example of a program that does not work on Chromebooks is Lockdown browser. Multiple courses require Lockdown browser, which helps proctor students taking tests online, however, Lockdown browser does not work on Chromebooks. To address this pressing need, we propose implementing a laptop loaner program, which will provide 35 Dell Laptops for students to borrow over the semester.

Thirty of these laptops will be semester-long rentals, while the remaining five will be reserved for week-long rentals. This program will bridge the gap for students who cannot afford laptops. By providing laptops equipped to process the needed extensions for student success we will see an improvement in student retention and graduation rates, as well as a reduction in DWF rates.

By establishing a semester-long and week-long laptop loaner program, we ensure that students facing financial barriers can still enroll in courses that require specific technology. This program promotes equity by providing all students with equal access to necessary resources and promotes a student's chances of academic success.

Overview

The University of Georgia (UGA) has implemented a similar program. However, the program is relatively new, it has already made a significant impact on numerous students. While exact statistics regarding the program's outcome are unavailable, the anticipated outcomes include lower DWF rates, increased student retention, improved academic performance, increased digital literacy, and access to educational resources.

Given the success observed at UGA, there is reason to believe that a laptop loaner program at Clayton State University would yield comparable benefits for our students. No student should face the prospect of failing a course or dropping out due to financial obstacles that may prevent them access to essential technology. We can promote equity and social mobility by providing students with the tools necessary for success.

Purpose

To ensure equity in our courses, it is imperative that students have reliable access to technology. Currently, we have Chromebooks that fail to provide the needed extensions students need. Compounding this issue is the restriction that Chromebooks loaned out by the university must remain within the library premises. This consequently means that students who cannot access the library during operating hours are barred from utilizing these resources. This limitation is heightened for students with full-time jobs or other commitments during the day. On top of that, there are added expenses and time constraints that can be associated with commuting to campus.

One argument is a student can use the computers at the library. However, it is essential to consider the practicality of this option. The operating hours of our library may not align with a student's schedule.

After calling local libraries they also do not have the needed materials a student may need to take our courses. Most libraries offer programs where participants can borrow laptops for a week, but these laptops are Chromebooks which, again, prohibit the use of extensions like Lockdown browser.

Relying solely on libraries imposes time constraints and also incurs additional costs and logistical challenges. These obstacles lead to late submissions, missed assignments, and ultimately, academic failure, which significantly impacts our retention and graduation rates.

Importance

We are committed to student success and social mobility, however, technological barriers pose a challenge to achieving this goal. We cannot ask professors to remove Lockdown browser since it is one of the few ways they can proctor online exams which helps limit student cheating. Therefore, we must implement a laptop loaner program to ensure all students have equal access to the necessary technology needed for student success.

Our laptop loaner program's purpose is to prompt educational equity. Our student body comprises individuals from diverse backgrounds, many of whom face financial constraints. While our library serves as a resource, there are many many factors preventing students from utilizing the library. By providing laptops to students, we eliminate this barrier and create opportunities for an inclusive learning environment.

Access to technology is not a luxury but a requirement for academic success. Without adequate access to technology, our students are significantly disadvantaged in their coursework. The laptop loaner program presents a proactive step towards addressing disparity and ensures all students have the tools they need to succeed.

Description of Program

Equipment

We should have 35 Dell Laptops. We chose this number because UGA currently has 30 as of Spring 24 and is expecting 45 laptops in total by Summer 24. While UGA is a bigger university, we believe having 35 Dell Laptops will put our students on an even playing field. It also will account for the desperate need for such technology. UGA currently has students on a waiting list for laptop rentals which means some students cannot access needed technology. By providing a high number of laptops that can loaned for a semester or a week, we can help maintain equal access.

Terms and Conditions

Students who already own a laptop compatible with required extensions should not receive a laptop loaner for a semester. However, they may be able to receive a week-long loaner.

There comes a concern that loaner laptops may be given to students who may not truly need them. We cannot avoid these situations and have to trust students. We already have a trust policy for our food pantry, so we should employ the same trust here.

Students must be registered for courses before receiving a laptop. Students who are not registered for any courses are not eligible for the program because the purpose of this program is to help students succeed in their courses. This means that before a student gets a loaner laptop they must be registered for at least one three-credit hour course.

Students will sign a waiver and be given a rundown of the program. Students will have a list of policies given to them. Students should also take an internet safety and cybersecurity course/seminar before receiving a laptop.

All loaner laptops will be due one day after the last day of finals. For example, the Spring 2024 finals take place from April 30 - May 6. This will make loaner laptops return dates May 7th. Students may request an extension if necessary. Students who return laptops late without prior approval will not be allowed to use the laptop loaner program for one academic semester. For example, if a student returns a laptop late for Spring 24 then they will be ineligible for the loaner program for Summer 24. Students who do not return the loaner laptop cannot register for classes, receive transcripts, and receive their diploma. We should not charge students for the late returns of laptops. This program is to help offset the costs of technology, so it is not fair to charge late fees as it may discourage students from returning the laptop.

If a student damages or breaks a laptop they will be required to pay a fee or pay for the entire laptop. The fee will vary depending on the damage to the laptop. Some damages are easy fixes and as the laptop gets older we can expect it to start to slow down. However, if a student breaks components like hinges, screens, or keyboards they will be expected to pay the costs to help fix those components.

Reservation and Distribution

Students will reserve laptops through an online booking system accessible via the university's library website and a link will be provided to student's emails. Reservations can be made up to two weeks in advance, however, priority will be given to students enrolled in courses that require

software not supported by Chromebooks. Once the booking system has closed for semester-long loaners, staff will be expected to go through the listing of students and select students eligible for the program. Once a list of eligible students is drafted it will be laptops will be given on a first come first served policy. Students who receive a laptop will be notified via email.

A valid student ID and proof of course registration will be required at the time of laptop pick-up. Each laptop will come with pre-installed security software, and students will be briefed on their responsibilities regarding the care and return of the laptop.

Laptops must be returned to the library and must be checked in with a library staff member. The library staff member will inspect the laptop and ensure that the equipment is in good condition and all components are returned. If a student needs an extension due to academic obligations, requests can be made via the library's help desk. Failure to return the laptop on time will result in a one-semester-long suspension from the program. We will and should not charge students for late returns of laptops.

The library staff will manage a waiting list for students in case of high demand and will notify students via email and a phone call when a laptop becomes available.

Technical Support

The Hub will serve as the primary support for the laptop loaner program. Students will be expected to reach out to The Hub if a problem with their laptop occurs.

Program Promotion and Outreach

The promotion of this program can be a mass email and posters around campus. We can have a survey via QR code and link available for students to fill out if interested. The interest form is not an official application but rather a way for us to gauge how many students may require a laptop. After going through interest forms we can reach out to students who show a desperate need for such technology.

At the end of every semester, students will receive information about the laptop loaner program and our program will also be shared at orientation sessions. Students will have multiple opportunities to fill out an interest form.

Implementation Plan

Timeline

The goal is to have this program implemented by the Spring 25 semester.

In the Summer 24 semester, we will start raising money for the program and allocating resources for it. The semester will be spent finding individuals who can help run a program and also spend some time making promotional materials for the laptop loaner program. This gives us time to train staff and create learning materials for students.

The summer will be spent reaching out to faculty to see what technology needs they need for their students. We need to ensure that all laptops will work with most if not all of the courses a student may encounter during their time at Clayton State University.

In the Fall 24 semester, we will secure laptops. By this we mean, researching laptops that will fit students' needs. We will have ample time to find the laptops, buy them, and secure them on campus. During this semester, we will start advertising the program via email and flyers. There will be information sessions held virtually and in person for students to attend. These sessions will be recorded.

By the end of the Fall 24 semester, we should have all laptops secure and can send out a mass email to students informing them of the program's launch in Spring 2025. Students will have the chance to fill out an application to participate in the program. The application will close out at 50 students, as we cannot provide laptops for all students.

We chose to cut off at 50 students so we can ensure we have enough laptops for everyone and to ensure we can identify students who need the program. We will have options for other students who are not selected for the laptop loaner program.

Some qualifications that a student may be denied are:

1. If a student discloses that they have access to technology
2. If a student is not registered for classes
3. If a student previously took part in the program and did not hold up their end of the agreement.

For students to participate in this program they must apply and be approved. They also need to sign a contract and take a course on cybersecurity and computer usage.

Collaboration

Multiple departments at Clayton State University must work together to implement this program. First, we should get a listing of all software that is needed in classes. By having this listing we ensure the laptops we provide can run all software. The Hub and the library should also work

together. Students will be going to the library to obtain the laptops, so library personnel should be familiar with how to use the laptops. The Hub will provide any technological assistance a student may need.

We also should keep in touch with UGA's laptop loaner program. By collaborating with a bigger university we can see what they are doing differently or similarly to us. We can exchange ideas and figure out what is working and what is not working.

Staffing and Training

We can have student assistants assist with the program. We can also hire staff and volunteers for the program. Honor's students who are required to participate in volunteer opportunities can use this program to count towards volunteer hours. Staff will be from the library, we should have someone designated in The Hub to help support students with technological errors.

Budget

The proposed budget for this program is \$20,000. With these funds, we should have enough to get 35 Dell Laptops and use the remainder to start outreach for the program.

Dell laptops can range in pricing, which is why we should talk with faculty about the programs they use for their computers. We want to make sure that the laptops we buy are compatible with everything a student needs. This pricing assumes that the laptop purchases are around \$500. The total cost then would be \$17,500. A budget of \$20,000 will then give us \$2,500 left over in case costs are higher or to use for program outreach.

The longevity of the laptop loaner program depends on funding and the condition of the laptops. However, we will need eventual funding or donations to keep a laptop loaner program going. Efforts can be made during orientation or graduation to inform students, faculty, and staff of such programs that are in need. We can also apply for grants to keep the program going. There is also the option of allocating a part of our budget to sustain this program.

Evaluation and Monitoring

Metrics for Success

The first metric will be a campus-wide survey to evaluate the need for a laptop loaner program. This will be an anonymous survey. Questions like the following should be asked:

1. What is your major?

2. How likely would you be to participate in a laptop loaner program if one were available?
3. What factors would influence your decision to participate in a laptop loaner program?
(e.g., rental duration, availability of desired software, ease of reservation process)
4. What software should laptops have that will benefit students?
5. Would you prefer semester-long or week-long laptop rentals?
6. How frequently do you anticipate needing to borrow a laptop throughout the semester?
7. What concerns or barriers do you foresee in participating in a laptop loaner program?
8. Do you have any suggestions or additional comments regarding the implementation of a laptop loaner program at our university?

By conducting this survey we will understand the initial need for a laptop loaner program at Clayton State University. However, we may not get a complete understanding for the need of such a program since not every student will complete the survey. Despite this we can get a basic understanding of the need for such a program.

After we have participants we can see how many of them pass courses and see if their grades improved if possible.

Regular Assessment

Students using loaner laptops will be asked to fill out surveys on retrieval and upon return of the laptop. One will be completed before obtaining the laptop and another will be filled after. We will also conduct a campus-wide survey for all students to complete to see the need for such a program.

Students who participated in the loaner laptop program will be expected to complete a survey. This survey will not be anonymous. Questions like the following will be asked before loaning the laptop:

1. Are you currently experiencing any issues with access to technology?
2. What specific tasks or projects do you plan to use the loaner laptop for?
3. How frequently do you expect to use the loaner laptop throughout the rental period?
4. Have you reviewed the terms and conditions of the laptop loaner program?
5. Are you aware of the software and resources available on the loaner laptop, and do you anticipate needing any additional software or tools?
6. Are you committed to returning the loaner laptop in good condition and on time according to the program guidelines?

By having a pre-survey we can understand what the student plans to do with the laptop. We also can understand where they are coming from a technological point of view. We can also ensure that the student has an understanding of the terms and conditions of loaning the laptop.

Questions like the following will be asked after loaning the laptop:

1. How did participating in the laptop loaner program impact your academic performance?
2. In what ways did having access to a loaner laptop enhance your learning experience?
3. Were there any specific software or tools provided on the loaner laptops that were beneficial to your studies?
4. Did the duration of the loaner laptop rental meet your needs effectively?
5. Did you encounter any challenges while using the loaner laptop? If so, how were they addressed?
6. How did the availability of a loaner laptop affect your ability to complete assignments and projects on time?
7. Did participating in the laptop loaner program influence your decision to continue your studies at Clayton State University?
8. Would you recommend the laptop loaner program to other students? Why or why not?
9. Will you be participating in the loaner laptop program again?
10. In what ways could the laptop loaner program be improved to better meet the needs of students in the future?
11. How would you rate your experience with the laptop loaner program at Clayton State University?

By having the loaner complete the post-survey we can see firsthand how the program helped the specific student. This will give us an idea of their experience as well as any new challenges we may not have thought about.

Conclusion

Expected Outcomes

One of the expected outcomes is increased student retention and graduation. One of the reasons why students leave University is because of costs. By providing a laptop loaner program we help negate some of those costs for students. Laptops are expensive and the books for courses are also expensive.

Another outcome is Lower DWF rates for classes like MATH 1101 and ENGL 1101. Already, I have students who do not have the proper technology to take courses like MATH 1101 and ENGL 1101. They can't use Lockdown browser or may use their cellphone to write essays. Students may also be encouraged to attend class more regularly.

The final outcome may be an increase in the student population. Once word gets around of a laptop loaner program at a more affordable college, such as Clayton State University, students may be more inclined to apply and attend our university. This may be because we will allow students who usually will not be able to access such technology to have equal access.

Overall

A laptop loaner program is essential to student success and thereby Clayton State University's success. Students should not fail a course due to a gap in technology, so we need to close that gap.

By providing week and semester-long laptops we ensure students have the access they deserve for their courses. We ensure advisors no longer hear that a student failed a course because of the lack of technology.

The use of \$20,000 for the laptop loaner program will ensure students have the chance to transform today for tomorrow.