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# Bridging the Students' Digital Divide

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## Citation Information

Bridging the Students' Digital Divide

## Copyright Statement

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# Bridging the Students' Digital Divide

Lending Technology and Proving Personal
Librarian Services

David P. Atkins & Jonathan Wilson, Sherrod Library

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- Classes moving online in mid-March 2020 demonstrated students' unmet needs for fast, reliable internet service and laptops
- Information Technology Services, Sherrod Library, and Student Life and Enrollment teamed up to lend some laptops & hotspots
  - Existing laptops & new hardware from ITS Online Fee
  - 55 laptops
  - 200 hotspots

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Institute of Museum and Library Services
(IMLS) CARES Act Grant Application

- Opportunity to "think big"
- Sought ~$400k for 200 laptops and 200 hotspots for students and to support "personal librarian" services
- Goal: Connect students with both the technology and university support services needed

## August 2020 – October 2020

- ETSU's IMLS CARES Act Grant Application Unfunded
  - 68 of 1,701 (4%) funded
- ETSU self-funded with CARES Act & Student Library Fee funds
- Acquired ~195 laptops
- Shifted from Grant Team to Implementation Team

## IMLS Grant Team

- Dean David P. Atkins, Prof. Celia Szarejko, & Asst. Prof. Jonathan Wilson, Sherrod Library
- Associate Dean Rachel Walden, ETSU Medical Library
- Mr. Adam Greever & Mr. Timothy Ferguson, Managers, ITS
- Drs. Michelle Byrd & Jeff Howard, Student Life & Engagement

## Implementation Team

- David P. Atkins - Dean of Sherrod Library
- Celia Szarejko - Director of Library Technology
- Dr. Michelle Byrd - Dean of Students
- Dr. Bonnie Burchett - Director Housing and Residence Life
- Adam Greever - Help Desk Manager, ITS
- Jeri Paddock – ASKUs Service Manager
- Jonathan Wilson – Online/Distance Service Librarian

## Timeline & Cost of Equipment 2020

| July | Verizon Wireless Hotspots (MIFI unlimited Access) | 200 at $426.00/yr each | $85,200.00 Annually |
|------|------|------|------|
| | Dell Latitude 3400 | 25 Laptops | $17,029 |
| August | Dell Latitude 7400/3410 | 66 Laptops | $54,060 |
| November | Dell Latitude 5410 | 130 Laptops | $128,310 |
| Supplies | Protective Cases, etc. | | $2,725 |
| | | Total cost: | $287,324 |

## How it works…

- Students apply through the Dean of Students
  - DoS office passes needs-based information to academic advisors
- Upon approval, the application is routed to ITS then Sherrod Library ASKUs desk for fulfillment
- Students pickup equipment at the Sherrod Library ASKUs desk
- Participants are assigned a Personal Librarian (PL)
- Hardware managed by ITS between checkouts

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https://libraries.etsu.edu/use/computers/lendingtech

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**LENDING TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM AIMS TO GET STUDENTS ONLINE**

NICHOLAS CROCKETT — MARCH 8, 2021    SHARE ON:

*East Tennessean*

https://easttennessean.com/2021/03/08/lending-technology-program-aims-to-get-students-online/

ETSU's Lending Technology and Personal Librarian Program is in full-swing.

"For some students that we have checked out devices to, this is make-or-break," said Jonathan Wilson, Sherrod Library distance/online education librarian and coordinator. "They would have dropped out of college if they didn't have this resource available to them."

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Sherrod Library Twitter
Sept 3, 2021

https://twitter.com/SherrodLibrary/status/1433884301947510786

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**Semester Checkouts of Laptops and/or Hotspots**

- Fall 2020 - 138 students

- Spring 2021 - 185 students

- Summer 2021 - 108 students

- Fall 2021 - 209 students

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## Students are contacted weekly by their Personal Librarian (PL)

The PL:

- Provides a variety of services for the student and acts as a liaison to ETSU resources so that the student has what is needed to be successful.

- Offers information about library workshops and one-on-one meetings for research needs, such as finding research articles, citation help, etc.

- Helps troubleshoot with equipment issues.

- Helps with Capstone & Theses projects.

- Assesses and evaluates the students' needs.

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## The Needs are as Varied as the Students

- Cannot afford the proper equipment or internet access.
- Tech issues and broken computers.
- Going home for the weekend or an extended time period and do not have internet access.
- Traveling for sporting or other university events.
- Rural Medical Students doing rotations and clinicals.
- Family emergencies.
- In quarantine.

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## Population of Students Served by Major: Fall 2020

**CHECKOUTS BY MAJOR**

Unknown 10
Criminal Justice 4
Counseling/Social Work 10
Business 16
Computer/Digital Media 6
Engineering 8
Sciences (Political, Biology, GEO, Anthropology) 18
Education 15
Nursing, Public Health, MD 51

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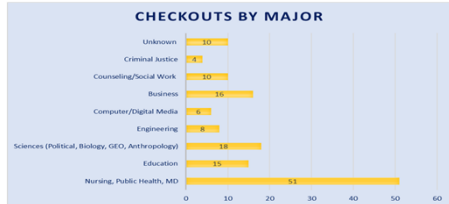
## Population of Students Served by Major: Spring 2021

### CHECKOUTS BY MAJOR

| Major | Value |
|---|---|
| Unknown | 10 |
| Sports & Health Sciences | 12 |
| Bluegrass | 5 |
| Business | 28 |
| Computer/Digital Media | 12 |
| Engineering | 16 |
| Sciences (Political, Biology, GEO, Anthropology) | 46 |
| Education | 25 |
| Nursing, Public Health, MD | 44 |

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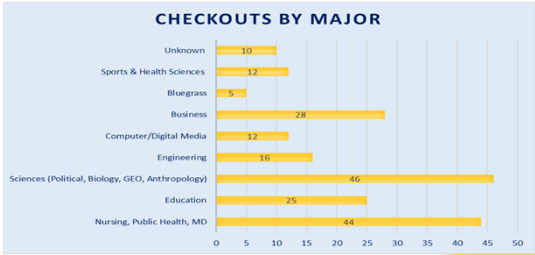
### HOTSPOT AND LAPTOP LENDING FALL 2020-FALL 2021

| | Month | Laptop | Hotspot |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2021 | September | 9 | 10 |
| | August | 78 | 72 |
| | July | 5 | 4 |
| | June | 4 | 9 |
| | May | 12 | 11 |
| | April | 12 | 14 |
| | March | 20 | 28 |
| | February | 21 | 29 |
| | January | 36 | 30 |
| 2020 | December | 23 | 14 |
| | November | 17 | 6 |
| | October | 0 | 23 |
| | September | 22 | 29 |
| | August | 41 | 14 |

■ Laptop   ■ Hotspot

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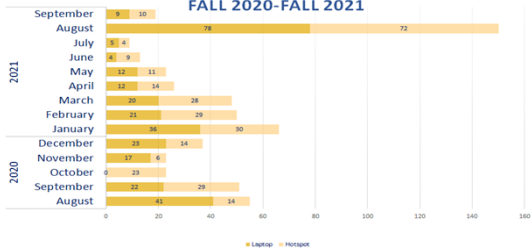
# Survey Results from Students Participating in Lending Technology Program

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Did having the equipment contribute to your academic success this semester?

Survey Results - 74 Participants



Did having a Personal Librarian make you feel more comfortable asking for help?

Survey Results - 74 Participants



How did having the equipment help? Check all that apply.

Survey Results - 74 Participants
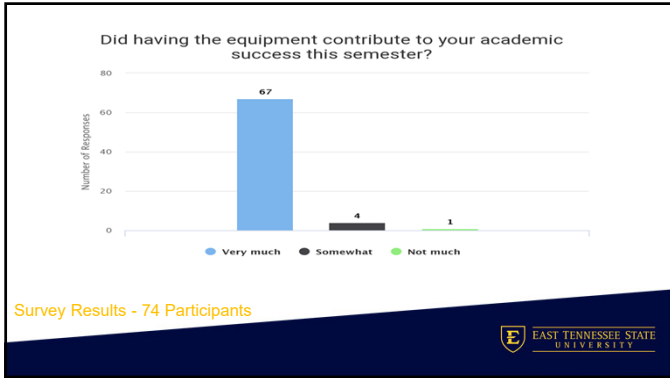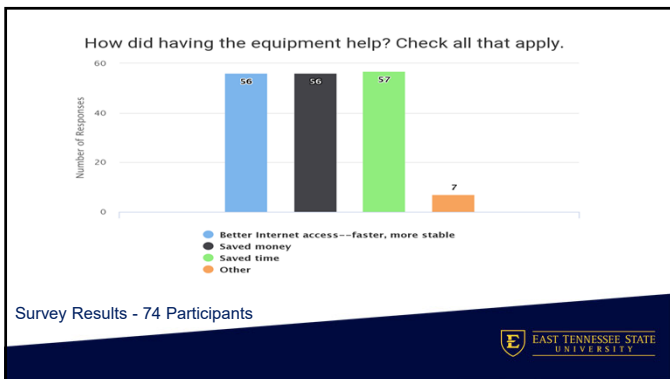
## Student Testimonials

"Saved time Having a very good and fast laptop computer to complete my numerous assignments and end-of-term projects was such a huge help that aided my fall term success. It saved me more than just time (to complete tasks), it also saved me the stress of having to visit (even on days not very comfortable doing so) my department's computer lab to get tasks done."

"It was easy getting resources since the Librarian was always on standby to offer help when needed."

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## Student Testimonials (continued)

"Better internet access-faster, more stable, saved money, saved time, less stress."

"Saved time having a very good and fast laptop computer to complete my numerous assignments and end-of-term projects was such a huge help that aided my fall term success."

**"I felt more relaxed since I had the necessary resources and I was able to come out with better grades."**

**"Amazing, I simply would not have been able to do college online if it weren't for the hot spots. I have no reliable internet source in my area and would have had to just up and move or live with a friend if it weren't for the hotspots."**

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## Recognition of the Lending Technology Program

- Chapter proposal accepted "Bridging the Digital Divide in Appalachia," in *Fostering Student Success: Academic, Social, and Financial Initiatives,* American Library Association (ALA) editions, forthcoming April 2022.

Accepted to present at:

- PILLARS Symposium: Preparation, Information Literacy, Libraries, Academic Resources (New York) July 2021
- New Jersey Library Association (NJLA)Conference June 2021
- Louisiana Library Association (LLA) Conference June 2021

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## Moving Forward: 2021-2022

- As classes move back on-ground in the Fall 2021, the goal is to target existing and potential students with financial needs.

- Pursue means to promote the program to help with student success, retention and enrollment.

- Review and plan for sustainability with the program, especially the annual hotspot cost and future laptop replacement. (The laptops are under a 4-year warranty.)

- Successfully expanded Personal Librarian Service Model to Transfer & 1st Gen Students for Fall 2021.

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## First Generation and Transfer Students

- Fall 2021- Initiated PL program for First Generation and Transfer Students.

- Involves 1,470 students
  - First Generation – 392
  - Transfer – 1,078

- Students receive a weekly newsletter with helpful information and tips.

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## Questions & Discussion

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