East Tennessee State University

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Bridging the Digital Divide (During COVID-19)

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Bridging the Digital Divide (During COVID-19)

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Bridging the Digital Divide
Lending Technology and Personal Librarian Services During COVID-19

East Tennessee State University

Sherrod Library

Presenters: Jeri Paddock & Jonathan Wilson

East Tennessee State University

▪ETSU's main campus is located in Johnson City, TN, in Northeast Tennessee

▪Mostly rural areas. Nearby Cherokee National Forest encompasses 655,598 acres of forest land

▪Johnson City (pop. ~67,000)

▪ETSU (pop. ~15,000) Undergraduate, Graduate, & Professional Students

▪Offers 22 undergraduate and 14 graduate degree programs

▪Popular majors: bluegrass, nursing, pharmacy, physical therapy, education, allied health, criminal justice
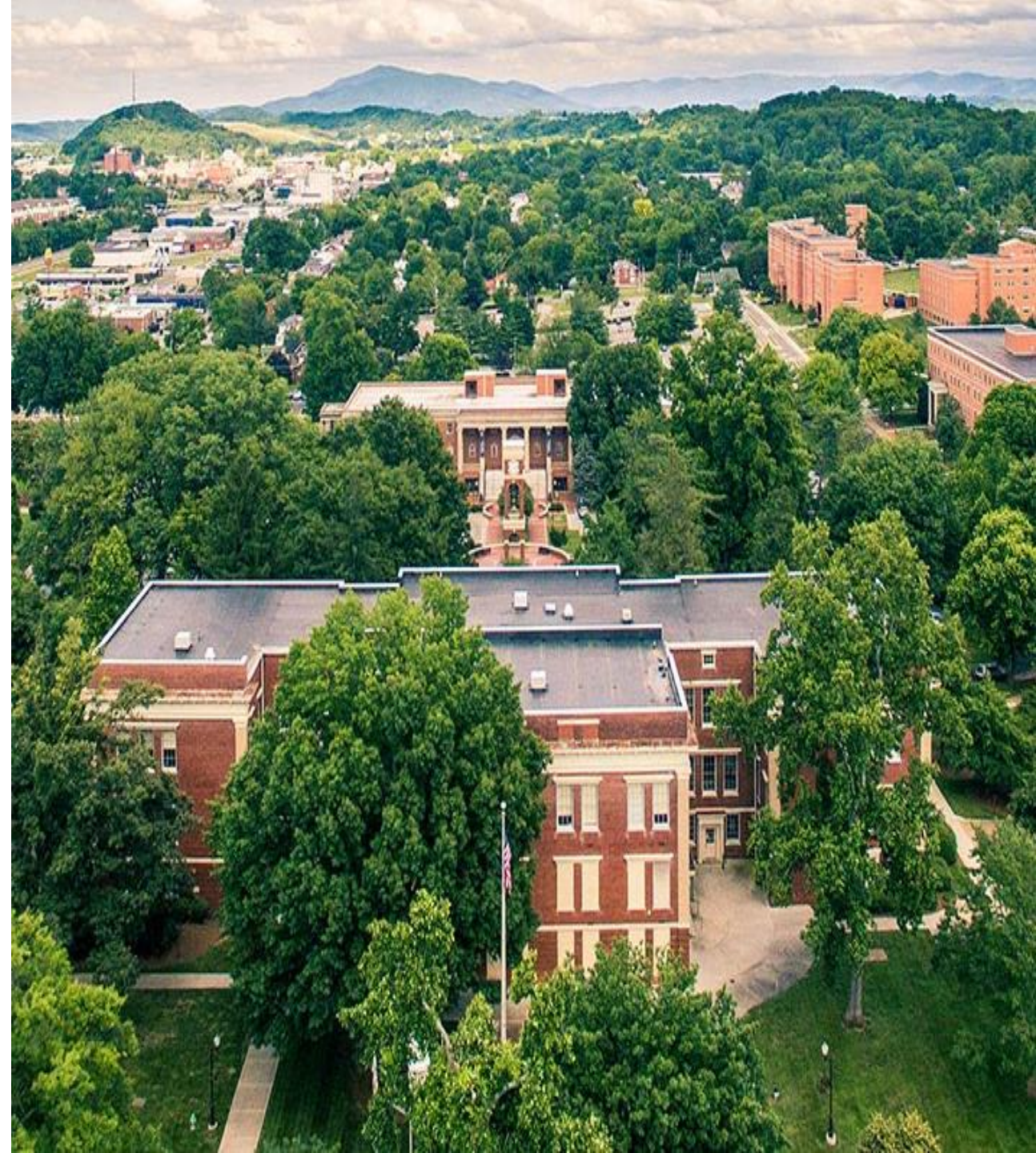
March 2020

- When all classes moved online in mid-March 2020, students' unmet needs for fast, reliable Internet service and adequate devices for participating in online classes quickly surfaced.

- Information Technology Services (ITS), Sherrod Library, and Student Life and Enrollment teamed up to lend the small supply of available laptops to students.

- Initial **55 laptops** prepared and distributed by ITS and the Sherrod Library.

- Student Life/Housing Services fielded requests and coordinated distribution.

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

- Requested funds for 200 laptops and 200 hotspots for students and to provide "personal librarian" services.

- Goal: Connect these students with both technology and available university support services.

- Grant Team:
  - ETSU Libraries (Sherrod & Medical)
  - Information Technology Services (ITS)
  - Student Life and Enrollment

August – October 2020

- ETSU's IMLS CARES Act Grant proposal unfunded.
- Funded ~68 of 1,701 applicants.
- ETSU self-funded the project.
- Campus acquired 196 laptops with federal CARES Act funds.
- Shifted from Grant Team to Implementation Team.

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 – Ask Us Service Manager

Jonathan Wilson – Online/Distant Librarian

Timeline & Cost of Equipment 2020

July 2020	Information Technology Services (ITS) CARES funds	200 Verizon wireless hotspots at $426 each	$85,200 per year
		25 Dell Latitude 3400 laptops	$17,029
August 2020	ITS CARES funds	66 Dell Latitude 7400/3410 laptops	$54,060
November 2020	University provides additional CARES Act funding to project	130 Dell Latitude 5410 laptops totaling	$128,310
		Supplies and protective cases	$2,725

Promoting the Program

Dean of Students	Library & Medical Library	Departments assisted in Promotion
Academic advisors, meetings, webpage, etc.	Signage, webpage, Rural-Remote Medical Students, *East Tennessean* (student run newspaper), Library Newsletter	Kingsport & Sevierville Campus Directors Student Life & Enrollment Center for Academic Achievement

Workflow

❖Students must apply through the Dean of Students website.

❖Dean of Students process applications based on student needs.

❖Once information is verified and approved, the application is routed to ITS then Sherrod Library ASK US desk.

❖Requests processed and equipment prepared for pickup by the Sherrod Library ASK US staff.

❖Participants are assigned a Personal Librarian (PL)

ITS Laptop Support and Maintenance

o Computers reimaged after each checkout.

o Local student account setup so that the student has admin access for installing software.

o Laptops are covered under warranty, including accidental damage.

o ITS has repaired around 10 laptops so far for broken screens, spilled liquid, non-bootable hard drives, data recovery, etc.

Students are contacted weekly by their Personal Librarian (PL)

Provides a variety of services for the student and acts as a liaison to ETSU resources so that the student can successfully complete their academic and personal goals.

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

Helps troubleshoot equipment issues.

Helps with Capstone & Theses projects.

Assesses and evaluates the students' needs.

Checkouts by Semester

o Fall 2020 - 138 students received laptops and/or hotspots.

o Spring 2021 - 185 students received laptops and/or hotspots.

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.
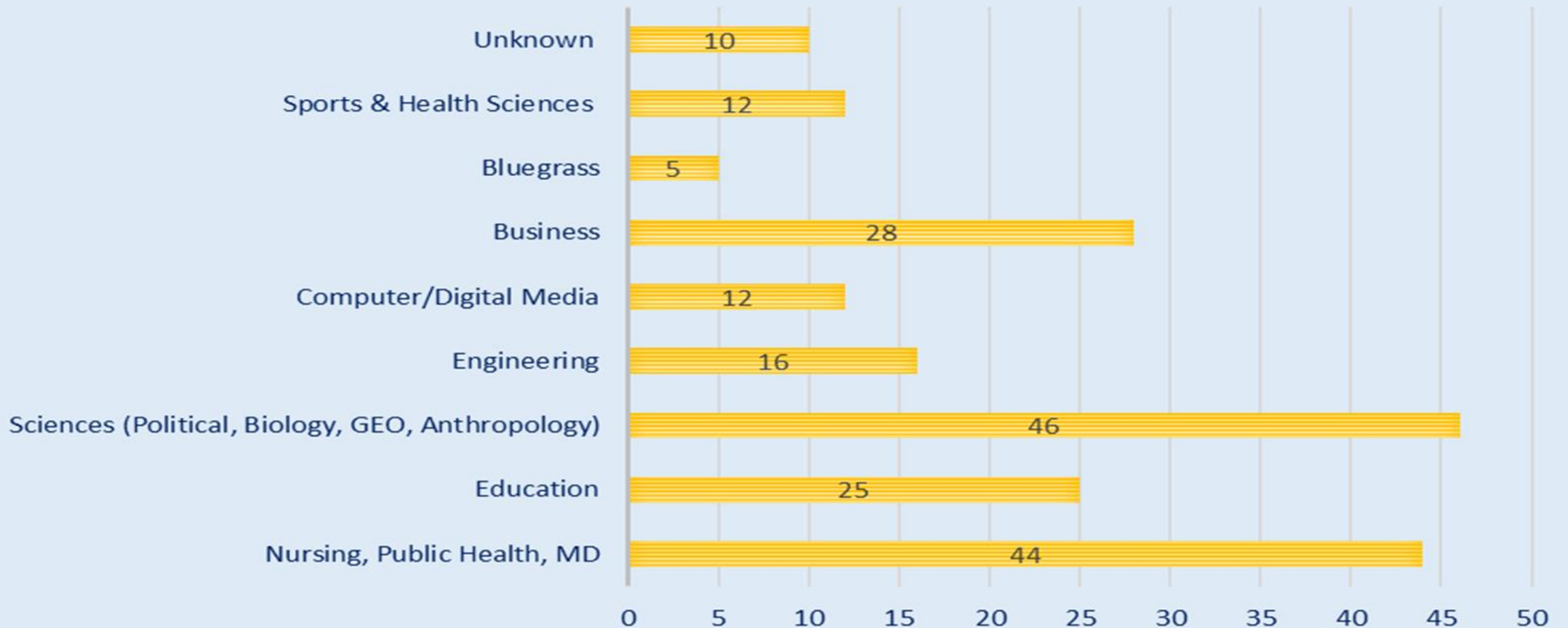- Family emergencies.
- In quarantine.

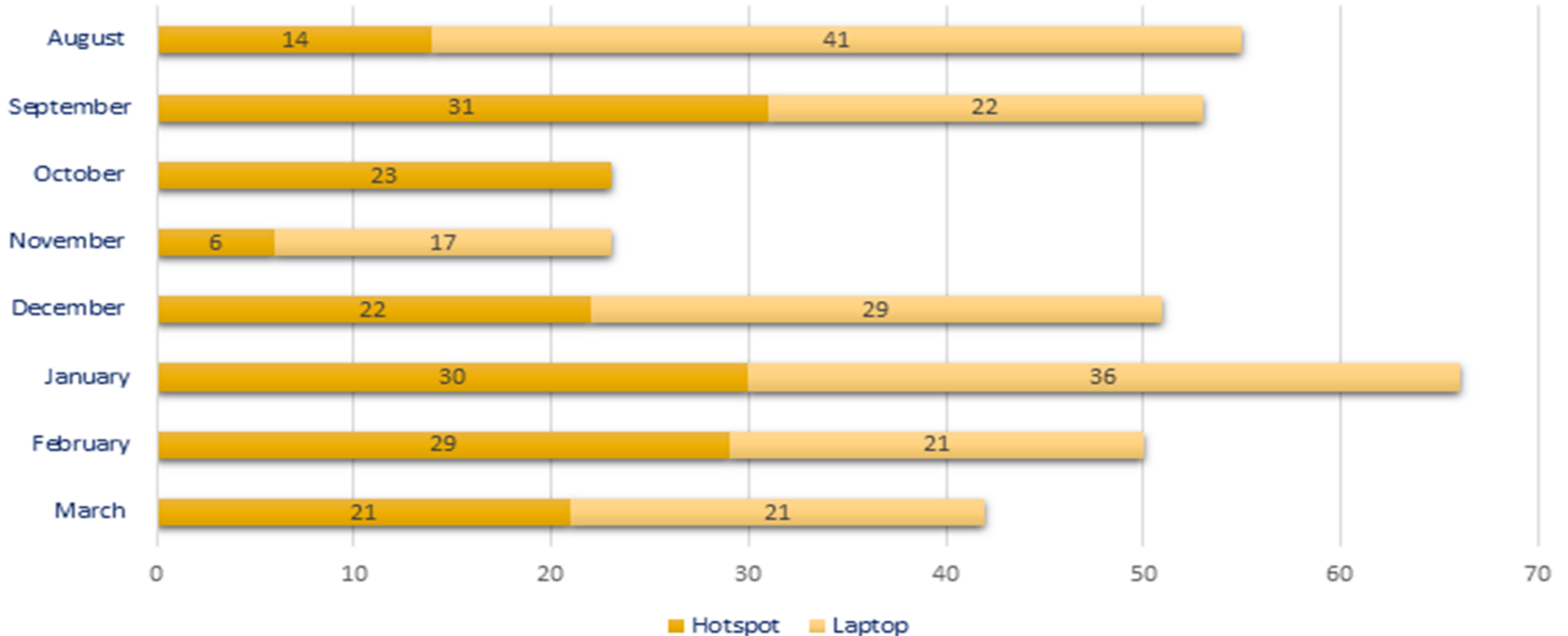# Population of Students Served by Major: Fall 2020

CHECKOUTS BY MAJOR

Major	Checkouts
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

Population of Students Served by Major: Spring 2021

CHECKOUTS BY MAJOR

Major	Checkouts
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

Fall 2020 Survey Results from Students Participating in Lending Technology Program

Did having the equipment help you complete your course(s)?
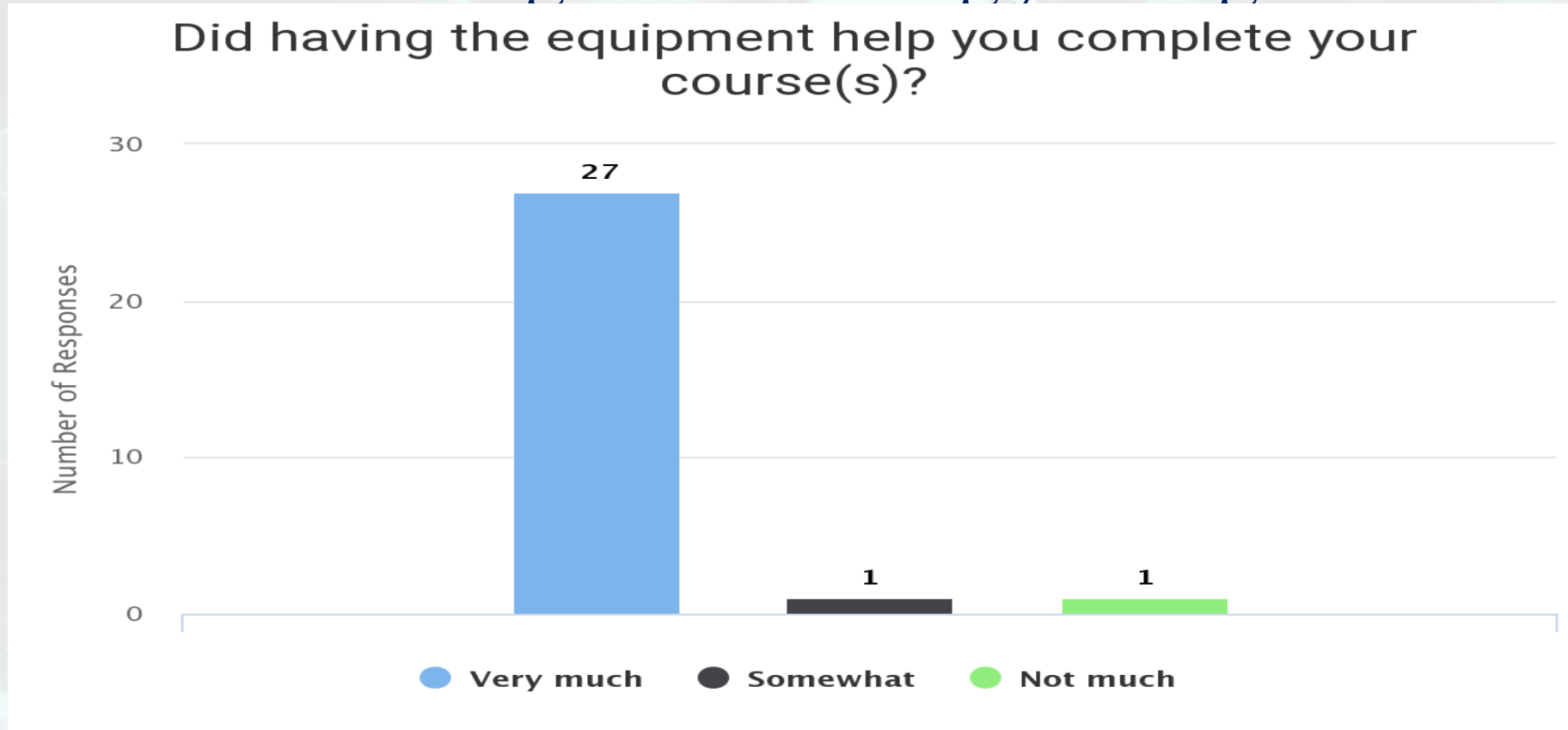
Fall 2020 Survey - 29 Participants

Fall 2020 Survey Results from Students Participating in Lending Technology Program
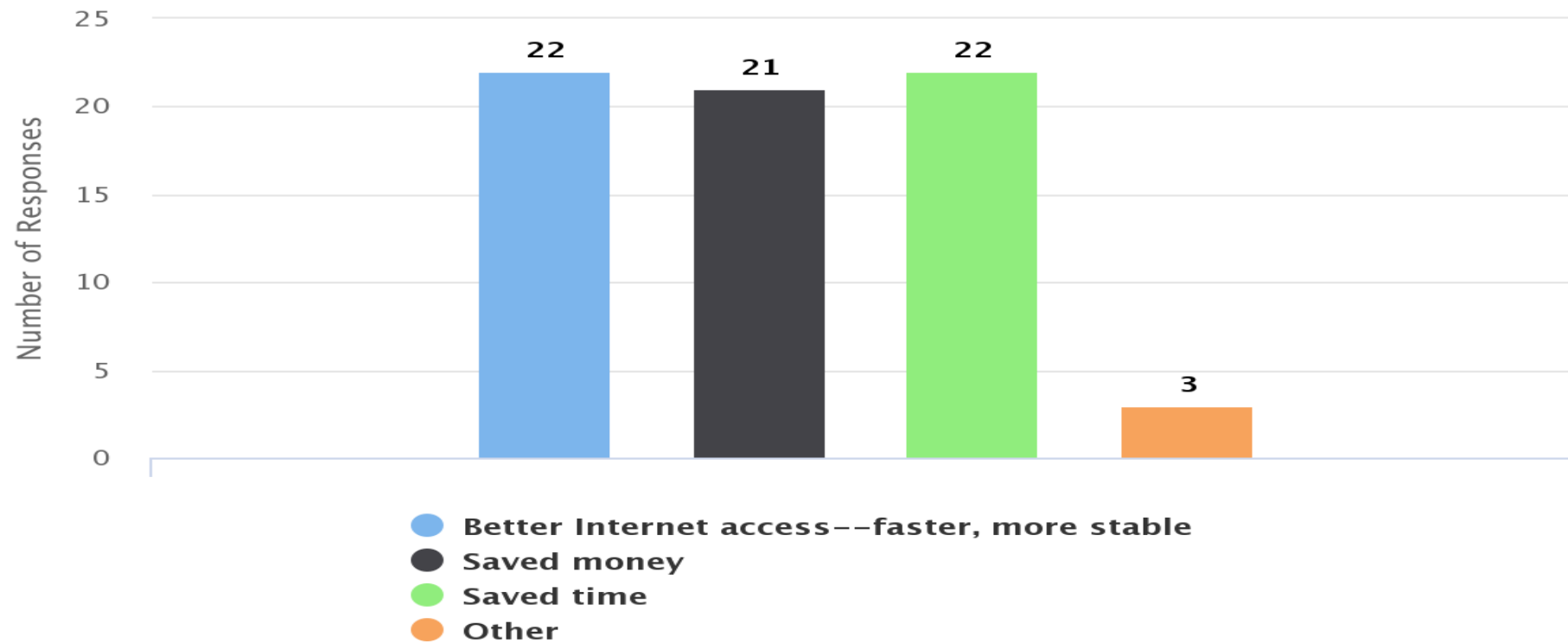

Did having a Personal Librarian make you feel more comfortable asking for help?

Fall 2020 Survey - 29 Participants

Fall 2020 Survey Results from Students Participating in Lending Technology Program

Fall 2020 Survey - 29 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."

Student Testimonials

"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."

Moving Forward:
Fall 2021

- 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.)

Thank you!

Questions/Discussion?