

*Approved as amended on
4/24/13. Effective Fall 2014.*

UC 12323 13S

To: Larry Williams, Chair, Undergraduate Committee

From: Christine LeVeaux, Chair, Student Success Subcommittee

Subject: Cullen College of Engineering Undergraduate Student Laptop Ownership Proposal

Date: 4/18/13

Committee members present: Djuana Young, Dan Maxwell, Roger Blakeney, David Mazella, Bela Patel, Christine LeVeaux

Proposed Language for the Undergraduate Catalog:

Beginning in Fall ²⁰¹⁴2013, students entering any undergraduate program in the Cullen College of Engineering are required to have a laptop at their disposal. Some engineering instructors will require that students bring their laptops to class. The minimum and recommended specifications for engineering student laptops are defined under "Laptop Specifications" at www.erg.uh.edu/academics/admissions/specifications.

Action:

The Student Success Subcommittee has met and debated this proposal on two separate occasions. We have included the questions sent to Engineering, with the responses. At this time, the committee's inclination is to send this back to Engineering and ask for more data in terms of necessity and viability of the requirement. Djuana Young, Admissions, indicated the need to actually have this information as we are recruiting students, and as we are building financial packages, so at the very least, the subcommittee did not see this going into effect until Fall 2014. The subcommittee feels that the approval of this requirement would have implications for the entire University and could set a precedent moving forward for other units on campus or for the University as a whole.

The Academic Policies and Procedures Subcommittee was interested in this proposal and requested the opportunity to also consider the item in their meeting. Their discussion resulted in similar uncertainty in terms of the proposal as it pertains to outfitting classrooms, loading software, computer requirements and again the necessity based on number of classes requiring the use of the laptop.

We would like to open this up to Undergraduate Committee for discussion.

Questions/Answers

1.) Have the current engineering students been polled? What level of support do you have for this with current students?

Reply: We spoke with and polled many students, in several classes, about how many students already owned laptops, and the responses indicated that somewhere between 80% and 95% of our students in engineering classes already own laptop computers. We also requested formal feedback on this proposal through our Engineering Student Organization group, called Cougar Paw. Fourteen student organizations gave us a vote, with seven in favor and seven opposed.

2.) Have you mentioned this possibility as you recruited students? One of the members of subcommittee is Djuana Young, Director of Admissions, as she said they have not mentioned this at all as they recruit Fall 2013 students. If approved, then maybe better for Fall 2014.

Reply: We have not mentioned this possibility as we have recruited students, since it was not yet approved. The college committees reviewing the proposal thought of this as being somewhat like textbook requirements in terms of the four-year cost for the students, and did not sense that it needed to be communicated through the recruiting process. An anticipated change of textbook to a more expensive textbook would not be mentioned in recruiting materials.

3.) You mentioned scholarship laptops based on demonstrated financial need. What will go into determining financial need and at what point in the student's process-- admission, etc.? This will increase financial aid budget and will restructure aid package.

Reply: The exact processes for scholarship laptops, or even whether this will be possible, are issues which have not been determined. We will notify financial aid about this requirement as soon as it is approved, so that the cost of the laptop can be included in the official estimate of the cost of attending. We would note again that the vast majority of engineering students already have laptops.

4.) Are there any plans to provide a laptop rental plan, beyond the short term, emergency laptop rental you mention?

Reply: There are no plans to provide a laptop rental plan.

5.) How many engineering classes will the students have that will require the use of laptop? Will all or most?

Reply: It has not been determined how many classes will require the use of laptops. We will start requiring laptops in the second-semester freshman-year course XXXX1331 which is required of all engineering majors. After that, we will continue the requirement in appropriate higher-level courses, as the students move through the curricula. For example, many classrooms now are not set up to support laptop use, and this will restrict us somewhat. Laptops will not be required in all courses. It is not clear at present what percentage of engineering courses will require a laptop.