

Student Computer Loaner Program Modernization Project

“At UC Merced, student success results from a collaboration and shared responsibility among students, faculty, staff, and administration. Because student success is at the heart of our planning and decision-making, we use robust and meaningful evidence to inform decisions about programs, policies, and practices. Providing support, guidance, and resources that equip students to pursue their educational journey creates the foundation for student success. Students achieve success by actively engaging in opportunities for growth in and out of the classroom. These experiences ensure that students have the tools to complete their academic, career, and personal goals.”

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Summary

In November of 2020, the Office of Information Technology (OIT) and the Department of Undergraduate Education (DUE) partnered to migrate a student computer loaner program previously managed using Qualtrics and Excel spreadsheets to a ServiceNow workflow with only two months to implement. On top of dealing with other pandemic needs, these teams came together to create a highly scalable and multi-use solution that created significant efficiencies. The result: a task that previously required 3 FTE to manage is now a turnkey solution that requires only 9 student worker hours a week.

The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.
~ Socrates

Problem Statement

The UC Merced Department of Undergraduate Education (DUE) administers a device student computer loaner program to support student success and instruction. During the pandemic, assets under management grew from 160 laptops to over 1,000 laptops, MiFis, and other instructional devices, and request and asset management became unmanageable and unscalable with the existing model.

Solution

A partnership was established between DUE and OIT to implement an easy-to-use scalable turnkey request and asset management solution with ServiceNow.



NOTES:

- Originally, DUE loaned laptops and MiFi's to undergraduate students. During the pandemic, the program was expanded to loan devices to faculty and TAs in support of virtual instruction.
- UC Merced's student body includes a significant population of first-generation college students. When remote instruction became the norm in 2020, many UC Merced students did not have access to laptops or reliable internet service at home, so providing these services were critical for student success.

"Thank you for having and creating such a helpful program that has allowed me to continue my studies amid difficulties during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many, many thank you's!"

- Diana

Department of Undergraduate Education – The Story Behind the Story

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, DUE expanded their existing Loaner Laptop Program to meet the operational needs of instructors and staff as well as students. On April 7, 2020, in response to emerging COVID-19 safety measures, the program moved to a shipping only model, with all items shipped 2-day FedEx to requestor addresses. The campus utilized a broad range of outreach efforts, including communications through campus deans and department chairs, student services and advising units, campus-level COVID-19 resource websites, social media and a “need resources” button on the campus’ learning management system.

The expansion of the Technology Resources Program would have not been possible without the hard work and collaboration from many campus partners who loaned re-deployment devices not currently used in their units, program partners who provided administrative support to facilitate the shipping process, and a generous donation from Hewlett-Packard. This donation helped loan laptops and internet hotspots to up to 100 Summer Bridge participants.

Goals:

- Increase student success and satisfaction
- Decrease management support hours of the loaner program
- Create a scalable, multi-use, and turnkey solution
- Implement a single technology solution using ServiceNow
- Management is to be simple and efficient
- Implement automation throughout all phases of request and asset management, including student communications
- Reduce asset loss risks and increase asset accountability
- Demonstrate the agility and partnership from both teams for rapid and successful implementation
- Reduce workflow and processing redundancy
- Provide reporting on the solution’s efficacy

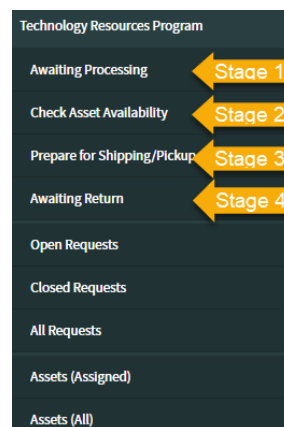
Innovation in IT

This project demonstrates an ingenious and creative way to combine request management with asset provisioning within a single IT solution while automating each step in the process. It also demonstrates a strategic partnership between DUE and OIT, where OIT helped to analyze the need, design, and implement a solution, and assist in the transition and training for DUE staff.

OIT designed the solution to utilize stages to visually provide the state of a given request. The four stages are:

- Awaiting Processing
- Check Asset Availability
- Prepare for Shipping/Pickup
- Awaiting Return

The stages bucketed the four types of requests together making processing of each stage more routine and easier to process. This was



especially handy when backup personnel needed to jump in and assist. The image on the right is the ServiceNow menu built for DUE for processing and managing all active tickets. The image below is an example of viewing stages in a report view.

≡ Short description	≡ Priority	≡ Description	Preparing for Shipment/Pickup Waiting for Catalog Task: Student Loan: Pickup Process				
Student Loaner Program request for: Evelyn	● 4 - Low	Student Loaner Program request for: Evelyn	▶	✓	✓	✓	04-26-2022 09:55:10 AM

The Timeline

- 11/12/20 - A project plan was developed, and user stories/resources identified. Development of the new form began.
- 11/20/20 - Combined undergrad and graduate/faculty request spreadsheets and reconciled asset and data issues. Imported both the request and asset information into ServiceNow.
- 11/27/20 - The Loaner Program SOP documentation began. Assigned assets were linked to loanees.
- 12/18/20 - Form development completed. Updated all ServiceNow request tickets to reflect the current workflow state. QA test the Request ticket workflow end-to-end.
- 1/4/21 - Updated any remaining asset changes into ServiceNow. Provided training for DUE staff.
- 1/11/21 – Go-live! Updated the DUE website to point to the new ServiceNow request form.

“Thank you for loaning me the MiFi device. It helped me with Internet access greatly. Without it, zoom and submitting homework/projects would be a nightmare. Thank you again for the loan.”
–Sincerely, Alex

Project Impact

As the loaner program grew exponentially during 2020, UC Merced DUE had to reallocate the effort of 3 full time employees to assist in the management of the program. Thus, this collaboration with OIT created critical efficiencies for DUE resource management as well as for program users.

Supporting Student Success:

- It was important to have a student computer loaner program working effectively and efficiently. The new solution helped to provide equipment quickly and efficiently by removing resource bottlenecks.
- Student’s stress was reduced due to the quick turn around and prompt communications.

Asset Loss Reduction:

- The new solution established accurate asset management reporting. With ServiceNow, DUE can tell quickly which assets are available to be assigned and which are currently loaned out.

Project Innovation

This loaner program was the first time the UC Merced ServiceNow team combined both the request management with asset management into a single service. In the end, with proper planning, documentation, and execution the whole implementation went smoothly without issue.



Scalability: OIT designed an automated solution that is truly turnkey and easy to manage. If DUE adds more assets or needs to manage more students in the program, the solution scales easily.

Agile Development: OIT used an agile development model for this project. With a short implementation window, it was critical that the project address the functional requirements of the program quickly and efficiently.

Reduced Cost Model: The solution significantly decreased the amount of staff support necessary for the program.

Measure of Success

Support Staff:

- Prior the pandemic: One full-time employee and a student worker (160 computer assets).
- During COVID: Three full-time employees (18 total hours a day) managing (1,000 assets)
- After Implementation: 3-4 hours a day (Student Worker)

Support Hours:

- Eliminated 15 hours per day through automation and simplification of the process during the height of the impact.

References

[Division of Undergraduate Education – Technology Resources](#)

[Division of Undergraduate Education – Web Site](#)

[Office of Information Technology](#)

[OIT Service Hub](#)