



Laptop Checkouts Made Easy

Case Study June 2018

*Two-part interview conducted with
Barry University & Tarleton State University*

Automated dispensing kiosks from LaptopsAnytime transform university computing!

Making sure all students have access to the technologies they need for learning is a critical requirement for colleges and universities. But using a desktop computer in a lab setting isn't always a convenient option for students. This is why many institutions have created programs that let students check out a laptop or tablet computer for temporary use.

Mobile device loaner programs can be a hassle to operate, however. Checking devices in and out, and making sure they are fully charged and in good working condition between usage, can consume many hours for IT or library staff if these processes are handled manually. LaptopsAnytime addresses this challenge with an innovative, secure, and fully automated solution. With a mobile device dispensing kiosk from LaptopsAnytime, colleges and universities can allow students to borrow nearly any type of laptop or tablet device—without the overhead required by a manual checkout desk.

Tarleton State Increases Laptop Checkouts by 30%

LaptopsAnytime's automated kiosks have led to a 30-percent increase in the number of laptop checkouts at Tarleton State University, says Chris Grantham, who is responsible for end user support within the university's Library Systems division. This means more students are able to access the technology they need to complete their studies.



Part of the Texas A&M system, Tarleton State is located about 60 miles southwest of Fort Worth and serves just under 9,000 full-time students. Its library system offers more than 200 desktop computers for students to use as they work on assignments.



← Tarleton State University President
Dr. Dominic Dottavio

▲
Library Director
Donna Savage

ID card and enter their library system password to access the system. If there are any laptops available within the kiosk, students can check one out for up to four hours of use within the building. (Before they do, they must agree to the terms of the contract they see on the screen.)

The kiosks dispense laptops from specially designed bays. Students return the devices by inserting them into one of the empty bays, and the kiosks automatically recharge them and return them to their original state. If a student returns a laptop after the allotted four-hour period, the system

But working on a desktop computer doesn't give students the freedom to use a private study room or a collaborative workspace where they can interact with their peers.

"With laptops, students have the flexibility to study in an environment that suits them best," Grantham says. To accommodate students' study habits more effectively, Tarleton State purchased 24 Dell Latitudes and implemented a laptop circulation desk several years ago. But staffing this desk was labor-intensive. And while the main library was open for more than 100 hours a week, the laptop circulation desk wasn't open for this entire time. If the desk wasn't open, the devices couldn't be checked out.

"That limited the availability of the laptops," Grantham notes. Grantham wanted a way to automate the distribution of laptops, so the devices would be available to students any time the library was open. He found that—and more—with LaptopsAnytime. "We looked at many different options, and LaptopsAnytime kiosks were the best fit for our needs," he says.

Tarleton State installed its first kiosk in the main library about five years ago. The kiosk held the same 24 laptops that used to be checked out through the laptop circulation desk.

But after eight or nine months, Grantham noticed that the laptops were being used more frequently because they were more readily available to students. "So, we picked up an additional 12-bay unit and installed it on a different floor of the library," he says.

The kiosks integrate with Tarleton State's library inventory software from SirsiDynix. Students swipe their university

assesses the student a late fee—and Grantham receives an email notification.

"It's nice that the system gives me a heads up, so we can get those fees collected as quickly as possible," he says.

Barry University Slashes Wait Time for Computers

At Barry University, a private Catholic institution serving nearly 8,000 students in a suburb of Miami, LaptopsAnytime kiosks have dramatically reduced the amount of time that students have to wait for a computer—without taking up much additional space.

In 2011, campus officials noticed that use of the university's computer lab had dropped, with only about half of its 72 desktop computers being used at any given time. "Because we are always challenged for space, we looked at re-purposing that lab space and moving our computer lab to another location," says John Baldwin, director of technology delivery.



Because so many students gather in the library to study, campus officials decided to move the computer lab there, with fewer machines. But space in the library was at a premium as well, so the new computer lab held only 24 computers. "As we monitored its use, we saw that it was very full—and students were often waiting to use a computer," Baldwin notes.

That prompted campus leaders to look at distributing mobile devices to students to satisfy the demand for computing time. "We wanted a solution that was easy to use and manage, with strong security," he says. "We didn't want someone physically checking out devices, because we didn't want to incur staff time."

Baldwin and his colleagues found just the right solution in LaptopsAnytime's automated kiosks. They installed the university's first kiosk in the library in 2012. It held 24 laptops, loaded with the same software as the university's desktop computers—effectively doubling the number of computers available to students. Students can check out a laptop for up to 24 hours, and they can take it anywhere they need to on campus.

"Soon after we installed the first kiosk, we started getting requests from students who asked: Why can't we have this feature in other locations as well?" Baldwin says.

In response to these requests, the university placed two more 12-bay kiosks in student-centric locations on other parts of the campus in 2015. A few years later, as part of a laptop refresh, Barry University replaced its 24-bay kiosk in the library with a 12-bay kiosk and added another 12-bay kiosk at a fourth location.

Together, these four kiosks have handled more than 8,000 automated checkouts since the program's inception. "It has been a great success," Baldwin says of the program.

Impact on Staff Time Is 'Minimal'

As these examples demonstrate, the kiosks can be

programmed to accommodate whatever local policies campus administrators desire.

At Tarleton State, students can use the laptops for up to four hours, and they are assessed a late fee if they return the devices after this time. At Barry University, students can use the laptops for up to 24 hours, and there is no fee

for late returns; instead, students get emails reminding them to return their device. If they don't heed these reminders, the dean of students is notified.

"Administration on the back end is very minimal," Baldwin observes.

LaptopsAnytime's magic comes from automating the device checkout and return process. When a laptop is pushed back into an empty bay in the locked position, it is docked to a power source so it can recharge automatically. What's more, colleges and universities can opt to license Deep Freeze or a similar program for restoring the laptop to its initial/pre-set state.

The laptops communicate their presence through an RFID card reader built into every bay, and they also communicate their battery life to the company's

central server. A laptop will only be checked out when it exceeds the minimum battery life established by an administrator.

Automatic notifications help administrators manage the loaner program as needed. For instance, an administrator can receive notification for late returns, bays that fail, or devices identified by end users as requiring service. Administrators also can visit the LaptopsAnytime website to view reports and even entire logs of every event that has occurred at a kiosk. All transactions are recorded by a camera that is built into each kiosk, so administrators can identify users by face if there are any problems.

Another unique feature is that the kiosks will distribute laptops to students on a rotating basis, so all units receive similar usage. This helps prevent some devices from receiving more wear and tear than others. "When we operated a laptop circulation desk, there was no guarantee this was happening before," Grantham says.



A Customized Solution for Every Institution

LaptopsAnytime kiosks can accommodate enterprise laptops from vendors such as Acer, Apple, Dell, HP, and Lenovo, as well as Chromebooks, iPads, and Android tablets. Colleges and universities are responsible for purchasing the devices, and LaptopsAnytime will deliver customized kiosks that can handle whatever devices an institution deploys. (**Contact LaptopsAnytime for current model list.**)

Because the form factor for each device type and manufacturer is different (and tends to evolve fairly rapidly), institutions might need to have their kiosk bays retooled if they upgrade or refresh devices. Depending on what kind of service plan they buy, this service may be included in the cost of the plan. For instance, Barry University is on the Platinum Plus plan, which includes a free SmartBay upgrade once every three years to account for its device refresh cycles.



LaptopsAnytime self-service dispensing kiosks highlight the changing technology needs within higher education.

"We have gone through three different retoolings of our kiosks," Baldwin says. "The service that LaptopsAnytime provides is excellent—and investing in the Platinum Plus service plan has saved us money in the long run."

Like Tarleton State, Barry University has students authenticate using their campus ID cards in conjunction with a password. The software driving the kiosks integrates with the university's Active Directory database to identify students.

To make sure students return the laptops to the correct kiosk, Barry University has taken advantage of the ability to brand each kiosk with customized graphics. The skins on the kiosks match those on the laptops they dispense, making it easy for students to remember which kiosk they borrowed their laptop from.

A Win-Win Scenario

Having access to the latest tools for learning is essential, and a student's finances should not stand in the way of his or her education. With automated kiosks from LaptopsAnytime, both Tarleton State and Barry University are making sure that all students have access to the technology they need for success.

Dispensing mobile devices through an automated kiosk gives students access to technology in a format that is convenient for them. It also saves space for institutions and doesn't create a drain on staff time. The result is a win-win scenario for colleges and universities.

"The laptop vending stations were an immediate hit with our students," concludes Tarleton State University Library Director Donna Savage. "LaptopsAnytime has provided an incredible service for us."



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