

EDITORS' NOTES

This volume of *New Directions in Teaching and Learning* is the first major publication on teaching with laptops in the classroom. Its primary purpose is to show that university instructors can and do make pedagogically productive and novel use of laptops in the classroom. As the chapters illustrate, laptops indeed offer rich new opportunities to make classes more student-active, thereby enhancing student engagement and learning. Moreover, these benefits can accrue without compromising the quality of student-instructor interaction or increasing the student workload.

This volume also has a timely secondary purpose: to advise institutional leaders on how to make a laptop mandate successful at their university. Recently, some such mandates have failed or have been canceled or scaled back. It seems that, without help, faculty do not automatically devise intelligent ways for the students to use laptops in class. After all, this technology did not arise to solve any curricular or teaching or learning problem; nor does it help meet any particular learning objective except computer literacy.

Clemson University has implemented a successful universitywide laptop mandate, which it started phasing in as of fall 2002. The favor it has gained with participating students and faculty is documented in regularly collected assessment data, which is summarized in Chapter One. The secret to the success of this mandate, we believe, is the Laptop Faculty Development Program, which ensures that faculty interested in teaching with laptops receive forty hours of training before they take on a laptop course. The focus of the training is not on the technology but on *teaching effectively* with it; in fact, most of the hours concentrate on pedagogy. Clemson is among the very few American universities with such a faculty requirement.¹ Individual consultation time and technical support are also readily available. Almost all the faculty coming out of this program change their teaching style as well as their technology. Specifically, their classes become more student-active, student-centered, and student-engaging than ever before. As a result, the class conduct problems associated with laptops (Web surfing, e-mailing) almost disappear.

Some of the more creative and effective laptop faculty are showcased in the chapters of this volume. They represent all faculty ranks and the full range of disciplines, from music to mathematics. They address not only the triumphs and efficiencies of teaching with laptops but also the sometimes daunting challenges of integrating laptops effectively into their classes, the technological glitches, and the additional course preparation and creative energy required. Most of the authors also share evidence of the impact of their efforts on student attitudes and learning. In the concluding chapter,

David Brown, a laptop pioneer and a leader in higher education, gives an outside expert's assessment of how varying degrees of instructional technology can expand learning opportunities, how laptops specifically can enhance learning, and how fully the pedagogical innovations presented in this volume exploit the laptop's potential.

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Editors

Note

1. Among the top twenty public universities, the University of Florida offered a faculty laptop program from fall 1999 through spring 2001. In exchange for a free laptop, faculty were required to complete sixteen hours of training, including only four hours on "using laptops effectively," which may or may not have addressed pedagogy (<http://www.coe.ufl.edu/NCATE/Documents/Tech-FacDevelopment.html> and <http://www.coe.ufl.edu/NCATE/Standard5.htm>).

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