

2022 Technology Fee Full Proposal

Title:

Mobile journalism kits for online students

Proposer:

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Purpose and Specific Objectives:

The coronavirus pandemic has created profound changes in teaching and learning methods. When the pandemic unexpectedly shifted our lives, video production courses were perhaps the most affected in our curriculum in the College of Journalism and Communications because such courses usually require the use of expensive equipment, which students do not own. Instead, students check out large and heavy tripods, cameras, and lighting kits from CJC for a limited time (usually 24-48 hours). As a result, online students are kept out of most production courses. We request \$18,900 to buy mobile production equipment, which can be added to any smartphone, that we would mail to our online students for a full semester, so they too can produce professional-quality media content.

With phone companies announcing [they sunset the 3G network](#) in February 2022, more people have been forced to buy a smartphone over the past few months, and the [Pew Research Center had reported in early 2021](#) that 85% of Americans owned a smartphone. So, incorporating students' smartphones into the video production learning process should not cause major accessibility issues. In fact, it would likely do just the opposite because:

- Research from Columbia University, [reported by the New York Times](#), shows disadvantaged students are more likely to be learning remotely, and adding such equipment to smartphones would reduce the gap in video quality between low-end and high-end smartphones. Though a difference may still be visible if the equipment is used, it would be less obvious than without the equipment, thus providing disadvantaged students a chance at a better portfolio and/or reel to use when they apply for internships or jobs.
- The same research for Columbia University concluded "less effective instruction [online] will widen the achievement gap." Shipping equipment online students can use with their smartphones will allow us to address this concern. Indeed, we would be able to improve our online curriculum to better serve our students who, as aspiring media and communication professionals should know the basics of video production. To provide anecdotal evidence, when I asked our Director of Online Graduate Programs at CJC which graduate courses would benefit from such mobile kits, he answered, in part:

We touch on video in many courses but speak more theoretically than hands-on because we have this precise issue, all students don't have access to the tools they need. So, we could look to revise some courses like those focusing on social media advertising, branding, strategic communication and digital media to include more hands-on components. Finally, all our online graduate students are required to complete the Capstone course. There, they identify communication issues and propose solutions. In their proposals, we ask them to include sample like visual images and could certainly expand that to include video samples if they had access to the right equipment. In fact, I know the students would love a production course like the ones we offer on campus, but we haven't bothered to develop the course because of the equipment issue. So, there's potential for a new course too.

Additionally, education theory supports the idea that students are likely to learn important concepts of video production better if they use a device they are already familiar with. Indeed, they can focus on the learning objectives of a video production course rather than the basic technical aspects of camera operation and editing. In a way, the bulky broadcast equipment we have students check out is like adding a confounding variable to the learning process. The student's attention is divided between having to figure out a new tool and learning the fundamentals aspects of shooting and editing video (e.g., image composition, framing, shot sequencing, etc.). The

mobile equipment will allow them to concentrate only on these fundamental aspects, which they can later learn to apply using other equipment if or when the opportunity arises (depending on their career choices). In summary, the proposed initiative ensures our online students have more equal opportunity to develop their skill sets. It effectively removes one of the traditional barriers to learning content production, which will translate into more students being ready to fill communication roles and improve the quality of online education.

Impact/Benefit:

Online students and instructors are the primary beneficiaries of this initiative, along with UF as a whole because such inventive teaching ideas can help us stay atop the online education rankings. Indeed, it is unclear how many other schools have implemented a solution like these mobile kits for their online students, but if any do, they are few and far between. That is why, if selected for funding, the CJC external communication team will create a promotional social media campaign about the benefits of these kits.

Media producing skills come with practice. [Our college](#) proudly subscribes to the teaching-hospital model of journalism and communications education, which provides students “real experience” in the media industry through our [Division of Media Properties](#). By design, we cannot provide online students with the same in-person newsroom experience. However, mailing online students mobile production kits to be used with their cell phone for a semester will still allow for them to learn by doing.

As remote work and online studies grow, we must innovate to guarantee students of all backgrounds have access to the majors and courses of their choice. Incorporating students’ cell phones into the production workflow minimizes the cost and size of the equipment, and every student can be affordably equipped with a complete set of high-quality production gear. This, in turn, will increase their chances on the job market and their potential for career growth. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced many broadcast professionals to use mobile productions even more than they used to. Network broadcasters (like ESPN) and local news have increasingly been using phones for their content, and many companies (for instance Apple or Bentley) have similarly used phones for their national or international marketing campaigns.

Moreover, these mobile kits also give us potential to eventually develop impactful multimedia projects that document an issue from a variety of locations. This would enable students to use their creativity to take charge in their learning while collaborating with their classmates to find innovative solutions to issues that may arise. These projects can even carry over several semesters and across several institutions who have mobile journalism kits. For instance, students could document the evolution of the Black Lives Matter movement across the country and/or the world. Each semester, students could build on the work previously completed by their peers. Over time, alumni of the project could visit our online classes to create a community that can interact remotely regularly. If done, this would assist online students in building a stronger network they can count on to find internships and jobs. Such multimedia projects can also be submitted to student-level contests or festivals, such as the [Hearst Journalism Awards Program](#) or the [Broadcast Education Association Festival of Media Arts](#) to receive external reviews of effectiveness, and perhaps regional or national recognition, which would, once again, give our students an edge on the job market.

Sustainability:

Because the equipment requested is tailored for *mobile* productions, we can mail it to our online students, and they would mail it back at the end of the semester. Thanks to the light weight of this professional-grade material, student fees are estimated at about \$97 per student a semester, including shipping, below some of the other on-campus production courses in our university. The table below (in the Budget section) shows depreciation costs are estimated at \$52.48 per student per semester.

To calculate shipping fees, random estimates were made with [the USPS Calculator page](#). For instance,

- shipping to/from Miami, the cost is about \$30
- shipping to/from Memphis, Tennessee, the cost is about \$31
- shipping to/from Raleigh, North Carolina, the cost is about \$32
- shipping to/from New York City, the cost is about \$35
- shipping to/from Los Angeles, the cost is about \$70

Considering most of our online students at CJC are on the East Coast, the average shipping fee is estimated at \$40 per student on average. Hence, student fees are estimated at (\$55.48 + \$40 =) \$95.48 per semester per student. This student fee amount is lower than many of our on-campus production courses at CJC.

Fees will likely be adjusted with time to ensure we can sustain the equipment for years to come, with the objective to always keep them under other production courses' costs. Because these fees cover equipment repairs and replacement, this initiative is built to last. With two courses of 20 students a semester, including summer, it could have an impact on up to about 1,000 students over the next decade, and because the main target population for this project is online students, they could come from literally anywhere. The equipment and its shipping will be managed within the CJC as a concerted effort between the existing equipment room, the Division of Media Properties through the Innovative News Center, and the Department of Media Production, Management and Technology.

Timeline:

Month(s)	Action
Summer 2022	Funds awarded.
Fall 2022	Technology purchased. All kits to be put together by CJC staff.
Spring 2023	First UFO production courses taught with these kits. Social media campaign showing students using these kits wherever they are.

Budget:

A total of 42 kits are requested, enough for two courses of 20 students each and the two instructors. Each kit contains a curated list of tools, carefully chosen to prepare students for tomorrow's content production environment. Each item fills a specific production and pedagogical purpose. The equipment was judiciously selected after research, a careful review of the available options, and personal experience using most of these items in broadcast production environments. The proposed budget allows us to buy all necessary equipment at \$450 per student only:

- **Pelican Case:** A quality case will last at least 10 years, which will minimize the depreciation costs and will ultimately result in one of the best returns on investment. A hard case is recommended because it ensures the equipment arrives intact when shipped anywhere in the world. Pelican cases are industry standards and have a proven track record of reliability.
- **Wireless Mic System and its lavalier mic:** A wireless mic system paired with a lavalier allows students or their subjects to be far from the camera while still recording quality audio. It is particularly useful for interviews.
- **Tabletop Tripod:** Constructed from metal, the tabletop tripod provides students with a method of mounting their cameras for interviews or time-lapse shots. The tripod uses a ball leveler that allows students to set it up in uneven terrain. The item is expected to last for five years, which provides an excellent return on investment.
- **Video Rig Kit:** This kit includes several must-have items:
 - A smartphone rig providing easy-to-grip handles so students can film in a more stable manner. The rig also allows students to attach on-camera lights and a shotgun microphone. Formed from durable plastic, it is unlikely to break and does not require technology to work.
 - A shotgun mic, i.e. the main method of capturing audio with the cell phone. Unlike the built-in microphone on most phones, which capture sound in all directions, the shotgun mic provides a narrow pickup pattern to capture clear audio in the direction the camera is facing.
 - Two microphone windshields used to block winds from hitting the microphone and causing unwanted noise. They are particularly helpful when recording outdoors and wishing to minimize "noise pollution."
 - Two portable on-camera lights providing necessary light to film in dark environments as image quality is directly correlated with the amount of available light on a scene.

- **Lens kit:** A lens kit improves image quality in several ways. First, it can eliminate reflections from glass, water, and other reflective surfaces. Second, the neutral density filter is a must-have item for proper image control. Finally, the 2x optical zoom allows students to capture close-up images without using the built-in digital zoom that degrades the image quality.
- **Adapter cables:** Different cell phones require different connectors to get the audio signal into the system. Because it is unclear what phone students will have, it is most efficient to purchase one cable of each type per package. That ensures that no matter what cell phone a student is using, they will be able to connect the equipment to their phone.

Item	Unit Price	Quantity	Total Price	Expected years of use before replacement/loss	Depreciation cost per year	Depreciation cost per semester
Video rig kit	\$60	42	\$2,520	4	15.00	7.50
Tabletop Tripod	\$27	42	\$1,470	5	7.00	3.50
Wireless Mic System	\$159	42	\$6,678	4	39.75	19.88
Lavalier Mic	\$60	42	\$6,678	4	15.00	7.50
TRS to TRRS adapter cable	\$8	42	\$336	2	4.00	2.00
Apple Lightning adapter	\$10	42	\$420	2	5.00	2.50
Lenses	\$40	42	\$1,680	2	20.00	10.00
Pelican case	\$75	42	\$3,276	15	5.20	2.60
TOTAL	\$450	42	\$18,900	-	110.95	55.48

Note: The amount requested is slightly higher than announced in the concept paper because CJC faculty were able to test the proposed wireless microphone system with a few on-campus students. They struggled using the system without a more traditional lavalier microphone. Hence, such a lavalier microphone was added. In addition, all prices were adjusted to today's rates.

Technology Fee Full Proposal Template Sponsor Signature Form

Title: Mobile journalism kits for online students
Proposer's Name: Dr. Roxane Coche

Note: By signing this form the sponsor is making a commitment to support the project. This may include providing startup, recurring or equipment replacement resources as presented in the attached budget.

Signature of sponsor: College Dean, or Unit Director, or VP for Student Affairs.

<i>Hubert Brown</i>	7 April 2022
Name and Title	Date

Note: By signing this form the UF IT unit is making a commitment to manage the project if selected for submission of a full proposal. This may include providing startup, recurring or equipment replacement resources as presented in the attached budget.

Signature of managing unit administrator:

_____	_____
Name and Title	Date