Proposal for the Use of the FY2001 Technology Fee

Submitting Organizations(s): Dept. Educational Psychology & Special Education, College of Education, Georgia State University

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1. Executive Summary

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<td>The Assistive Technology Lab meets course requirements in special and general education. It also provides the use of Assistive Devices for college students with disabilities.</td>
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2. Project Description

Georgia State University currently has a state of the art Assistive Technology Lab, located in Room 120 of the College of Education. It is the only one of its kind in the Atlanta area, designed to meet the needs of masters, specialist, and doctoral students in special education; undergraduate students in general education; and GSU students with disabilities. This facility contains approximately $150,000 of assistive technology equipment. Due to the rapidly developing field of assistive technology and the expanding GSU program offerings in this area, there is a need to maintain and continuously update the Assistive Technology Lab. This proposal requests for funds to provide continuing support for the Assistive Technology Lab as a critical component of students’ programs in special education and general education, as well as a resource to all students at GSU, especially those with disabilities.

Assistive technology is technology that focuses on the special needs of individuals who have a variety of special sensory, motoric, cognitive, and/or linguistic needs and is designed to assist them to effectively function across environments. Assistive technology includes mechanical, electronic, microprocessor-based equipment; nonmechanical and nonelectroic devices; and specialized instructional materials, services, and strategies. Examples include augmentative communication devices, alternative computer keyboards, screen reading software, specialized academic software, and environmental control units.

Georgia State University draws statewide and national attention with their Special Education Programs in physical/health impairments, sensory impairments, and cognitive impairments. These premiere graduate programs have received federal funding and national recognition due to their unique design. Especially prominent is their emphasis on assistive technology which is needed to meet the needs of children with disabilities in the school setting. Students in these masters programs, as well in deaf/hard of hearing, mental retardation, early childhood special education, communication disorders, and interrelated special education programs, contain strands and/or courses in assistive technology. For these students, the Assistive Technology Lab as a vital learning tool for demonstrations, skill acquisition, and class
assignments. Approximately 10 courses use the Assistive Technology Lab for instructional purposes for students in the Masters program, including those in the College of Education and College of Arts and Sciences (Comm 6910).

Students enrolled in the Specialist program (Ed.S) and Doctoral Programs in Exceptional Children also require the latest information on Assistive Technology. A new concentration in the Specialist program in Assistive Technology was developed last year due to school systems’ growing need for Assistive Technology Specialists who are responsible for leading team efforts to evaluate and meet the assistive technology needs of students throughout their school system. With GSU having the only Assistive Technology program in the state, students come to GSU to learn the necessary knowledge and skills. Doctoral students also take coursework in the area of Assistive Technology. In both the specialist and doctoral programs, GSU students use the Assistive Technology Lab for hands on learning of the various types of assistive technology. Approximately 6 courses use the Assistive Technology Lab for students in the Specialist and Doctoral programs.

Students in general education need to be familiar with assistive technology to meet the needs of students with disabilities who are in their classrooms. Because of this, the Introduction to Exceptional Children course, which is a requirement for all teachers, contains a component of assistive technology and students come to the lab for demonstration and hands on learning. This involves well over a hundred students a year. In addition, the lab is open to other GSU students who are interested in learning about assistive technology, or who have disabilities themselves and need the lab to complete course assignments.

Georgia State students with disabilities also have access to the Assistive Devices in the Lab for their own personal use. The Lab is also available to Disability Services at Georgia State. However, due to limited resources the Lab has not been open as frequently as desirable.

In order to meet the needs of GSU students who are learning about (or using) assistive technology, funding is necessary to update equipment in the Assistive Technology Lab every year, in order to keep pace with new developments in the field. With the expansion of a new Specialist program in Assistive Technology, request to use the lab across multiple courses, and need for individual use, a part time Asst. Director position is also requested. Previous federal grants and GSU Instructional grants provided the initial money to develop the Assistive Technology Lab. These grants are over and the only current source of revenue is the department which is not sufficient by itself to maintain the lab. In no way does this proposal supplant current funds.

3. Relevance to Regents Guidelines

This proposal is consistent with four of the Regents guidelines for use of the Technology Fee. With over 15 courses using the lab and various components of assistive technology, this proposal aligns with the Regents Guidelines to have technology fee revenues “be used primarily for the direct benefit for students to assist them in meeting the educational objectives of their
academic programs” [Guideline #1]. This proposal also meets the Reagent’s technology fee guidelines for “hardware and Network related expenditures that include support of general purpose or special purpose laboratories used by students for body productivity and more discipline related activities” [Guideline #3]. The majority of computers in the lab (8 out of 14) are connected to the Internet for access to special purpose databases (e.g., Abledata) and instruction on accessing the Network through computer modifications and specialized software for individuals with disabilities (e.g., screen readers (e.g., JAWS) screen enlargers (e.g., Zoomtext). The Assistive Technology Lab is available for training of students, staff and faculty, which is consistent with Regent’s Guideline #4. The fourth guidelines that this proposal qualifies for is that the technology fee revenues may be used “for new staffing that is either temporary or ongoing”. An Assistant Director is requested to assist with lab administration, upkeep, and smooth functioning of the lab.

4. Justification of One-time Funding Requirements Not applicable, see #5.

5. Continuing Funding Requirements

Due to the rapid innovation of new products in assistive technology, it is anticipated that new software, hardware, augmentative communication devices, and other assistive technology devices will be needed to update the lab. It is anticipated that $20,000 a year will be needed to keep the lab current.

Currently, Dr. Kathy Heller directs the Assistive Technology Lab. Due to her teaching schedule (which can’t be modified), grant management, and increase demands for the Assistive Technology lab use, a part time assistant director is needed. This person must have advanced knowledge and skills in Assistive Technology in order to demonstrate equipment, assist with ordering and updating equipment, and help maintaining smooth working order of the lab. It is anticipated that the part time Assistant Director would be hired at a half time position (.5) for $18,000 with benefits ($5,182 calculated at 28.79%).

Two GRAs will be needed to help keep the lab open during evening hours when graduate classes come to the lab for demonstration and assignments, as well as during the day for undergraduate students and students with disabilities. Two GRA I at 1.5, for both semesters and summer term would be $4,500.

6. Accountability of Funds

Funds from this proposal will be monitored on a spread sheet showing allocation of funds. An inventory log will be maintained of all equipment purchased and equipment will be available in the lab. In addition, a university inventory system is in place which will be used for equipment purchases, and audits are performed semiannually. Purchases are handled though GSU Receiving Department and they are decaled and placed into the equipment database. Human Resource and Employment Office assures employment of qualified applicants and payroll disbursements track salary allocations.

7. Additional Funding Required, Non-Technology Fee
No additional funding is required beyond what is requested in the proposal.

8. Impact on Computing/Network Infrastructure
   Since the Assistive Technology Lab is already in existence, no increase on the current computing/network infrastructure is anticipated over what is currently being used by the 8 (out of 14 computers) connected to the Internet through GSU. Most assistive technology use will involve software and devices contained in the lab.