



## Florida Southwestern now offers laptop vending machines that students can borrow while on campus

A new vending machine at Florida South Western State College is catching the attention of local students — and not because of its chips, candy and soda selection.

Instead, the machine pops out laptops students can borrow for up to four hours at a time and use anywhere on campus. And the best part: it's free.

The unmanned laptop kiosks are part of a forward-thinking step by the college to ensure all students, regardless of their economic background, have access to “the same tools,” explained Jason Dudley, FSW’s chief information officer.

“One of the things we have been looking at is that not all of our students can afford the same technology, so we wanted to make sure all of our students have the same opportunities to succeed at the college with technology,” he said.

Florida SouthWestern State among “forward-thinking pack of schools’ for study abroad.

The machine, made by LaptopsAnytime, can house up to 12 laptops, which are split over two, easy-to-access rows. The computers slide in and out of slots vertically. Once a device is returned to its home port, the laptop is charged and a memory sweep is done. Dudley picked up the idea at a national conference and decided to launch a pilot program at FSW. It was paid for with \$60,000 from the IT budget.

In August, the first laptop kiosks were placed at the campuses in Lee and Collier counties. Today, the program has 36 purple-and-teal colored laptops available through student kiosks at its four campuses throughout Southwest Florida.

A fifth one has been added in Fort Myers for faculty and staff use. Students borrowed laptops 1,331

times during the fall semester. Here's a look at the checkouts for each campus:

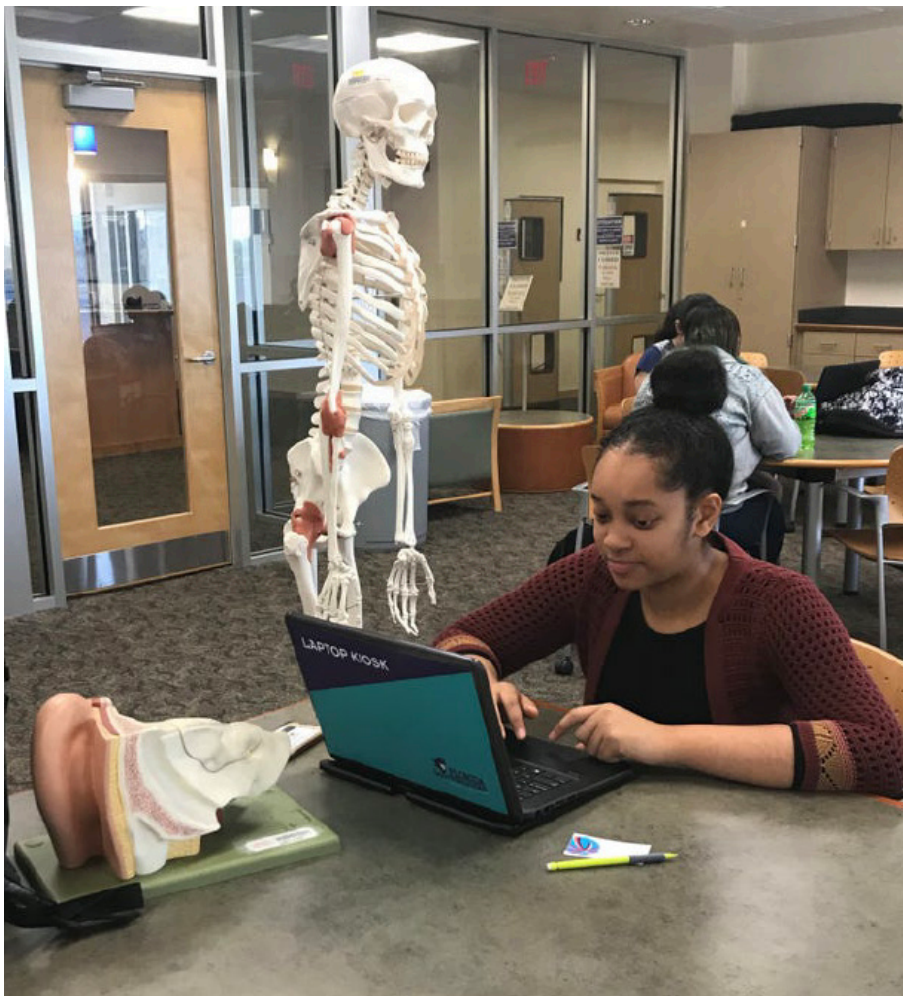
- 757 in Lee.
- 491 in Collier
- 66 in Charlotte
- 17 at the Hendry/Glades

As of Feb. 6, FSW had already recorded 2,200 checkouts from all the laptop kiosks— nearly 900 more checkouts than in the entire first semester of the program.

Students use their ID card to check out the devices, just like a library book, and agree to the terms of use, which means the laptop must be returned after four hours. Students can immediately check out another laptop to finish their work for the day.

If a device is late, the user will be charged \$5 for every additional hour, with the fee capped at \$120. If a device is lost or stolen, the replacement fee costs students \$850.

Dudley joked that he “should knock on wood,” but none of the laptops have been lost and only four have been returned after the four-hour mark. In those few circumstances, Dudley said staff used the situation as a “training opportunity,” so no student has actually been charged.



*Nia Sang, 16, studies for an anatomy and physiology exam with the help of a borrowed laptop at Florida South Western State College.*

~PAMELA MCCABE

### **FSW turns classrooms into a hospital for training exercises.**

The most used kiosk is at the Fort Myers' campus, located on College Parkway. The machine was placed to the right of the second-door entrance to the Richard H. Rush Library near Dunkin'.

Nia Sang has become a bit of a kiosk regular lately, and borrowed a laptop last week to study for an anatomy and physiology exam. The 16-year-old is dual enrolled at the college through the campus' collegiate high school and is on track to complete her first two years of college at the same time she earns a high school diploma.

While she has her own laptop at home, she doesn't always want the “hassle” of lugging around the device during her school day. Because she wants to use the most of her time in between classes, she has found the laptop kiosks to be a great resource.



"It's been very helpful to me," Sang said, adding that she's used the laptops to create presentations for class, write essays and study for exams.

The laptops have helped her focus on her coursework and boost her grades.

"It's pushing me to study more, to really be focused on my work, so I definitely recommend it to any of my friends or students who are hoping to come here," she said.

Each laptop runs typical programs, like Microsoft Office, and allows internet connection through the college's WiFi, so the devices can only access the web onsite. Also, they come with cameras and microphones, as well as software used to proctor exams.

Two years ago, the college launched online testing to step away from an in-house proctoring center. Although most of the work students need to do for a course could potentially be done from a phone, the testing part needed specific software.

"Some students may not have all the technology they need at home," Dudley said. He added, so "they can grab one of those laptops and go get a quiet room up in the library and take their test."



### **FGCU, FSW "harden" open campuses with new security efforts**

Samaliz Pinero, 20, said she liked how students who didn't own laptops could use them and saw them as something all students could find "beneficial."

"Laptops do break, it does happen, so it's really cool to have one right there that's convenient," she said.

A similar sentiment was shared by Bryan Almanzar, 19, who said he would definitely check out a laptop.

"For me I think it's good because sometimes I don't bring my laptop because I don't have enough power or maybe my dad is using it or something," he said. "I can now have this resource and just use it and bring it to class."