Colleagues,

President Drake and I are excited to share an initiative to further support our university’s academic and outreach missions.

Through a new collaboration with Apple, Ohio State is launching the Digital Flagship University, which has three main components:

- a student-success initiative to integrate learning technology throughout the university experience
- an iOS design laboratory on the Columbus campus serving faculty, staff, students and members of the broader community
- university-wide opportunities for students to learn coding skills to enhance their career-readiness in the app economy

We expect that these elements will inspire new ways to serve our students, using technology to amplify Ohio State’s strengths as a national flagship public research university. We look forward to working with you as this process unfolds to support promising new ways of teaching, learning and collaborating.

This effort represents a major initiative under Ohio State’s strategic plan, with particular focus on teaching and learning as well as research and creative expression. Over the next year and beyond, we will engage with faculty and staff on new apps and other resources to make the most of this opportunity.
For more information, please see the links on our strategic plan webpage.

Sincerely,

Bruce A. McPheron, PhD
Executive Vice President and Provost

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203 Bricker Hall, 190 North Oval Mall, Columbus, OH 43210
provost@osu.edu | oaa.osu.edu
Incoming Ohio State freshmen line up for university-issued iPads

By Jennifer Smola
The Columbus Dispatch
Posted at 3:32 PM
Updated at 3:32 PM

iPads were moving at Ohio State University on Monday like an Apple Store two days before Christmas.

Incoming freshmen filed into a room in Drake Performance and Event Center on Monday morning, one of their first stops after checking in at orientation registration, to receive the Apple iPad they’ll have with them throughout their time at Ohio State.

Student volunteers distributed canvas Ohio State bags filled with an iPad Pro, case, Apple Pencil and Smart Keyboard as students entered.

And then the unwrapping began.

New students snapped on their cases and swiped through the apps on their new devices. Within moments of unboxing her iPad, incoming Ohio State student Bailey Ramsey, of Cincinnati, had taken a photo of her Ohio State orientation name tag and set it as the background image on her new device. It’ll set hers apart from the 7,000 other iPads in the hands of all incoming freshmen this fall.

Monday’s session was an entirely new part of Ohio State’s freshmen orientation, thanks to the university’s new Digital Flagship initiative with Apple. In addition to equipping all first-year students with the Apple products, the “unprecedented” collaboration between the tech giant and Ohio State also includes the creation of an iOS design laboratory and increased opportunities for students to learn coding and mobile-app development.
It’s no small undertaking. Though the university is paying a discounted rate for the equipment as part of the partnership, Ohio State still is spending approximately $11.1 million over four years to equip this fall’s incoming class with the devices.

Ohio State is in its third week of orientation sessions, with approximately 250 students coming through to receive and set up their iPads on Mondays through Thursdays, said Cory Tressler, Ohio State’s director of learning programs and leader of its Digital Flagship initiative.

“Over this past year, sort of leading up to this point, it’s been a lot of work, but a lot of really good energy. People are really excited about it,” Tressler said. “It’s really nice to see this part of it, because there’s been a lot of planning leading up to this.”

The iPads distributed to students include a “Discover” app created by Ohio State to help guide students through their orientation and the weeks leading up to college. Included on the app were students’ orientation schedules, tips for taking notes, a searchable guide to student organizations and a course planner.

Some students said they plan to use the iPad exclusively during their studies, or at least hold off before making a decision on whether to purchase a laptop.

Tressler said some majors may be better for iPad use than others, and that the university is reminding students in certain fields of study, such as engineering, that they may need sophisticated software at some point that the iPad doesn’t yet support.

Incoming journalism major Madisyn Staggs, though, hopes to use her new iPad for her studies instead of buying a computer.

“It’s pretty cool because I don’t have to buy a laptop now, since it has a keyboard and everything. That was one of the big things I was going to have to buy,” said Staggs, 17, from Wheelersburg, Ohio. “It’s extra money for books. It means I don’t have to get a job as soon as I get into college, kind of have some time to settle in and everything.”
Jordan Ndeli, an incoming pre-athletic training major from Sayreville, New Jersey, was set on attending Ohio State since her first campus visit, but the iPad was a nice bonus, she said.

“It’s really cool how dedicated they are to making sure every student has an equal opportunity with the iPads,” Ndeli said. “We all kind of have them together.”

jsmola@dispatch.com

@jennsmola
This time, Ohio State freshmen getting Apple from the teachers

By Jennifer Smola
The Columbus Dispatch

The first day of school means paper, pencils, apples. You know the drill.

But for the first day at Ohio State University on Tuesday, you’d better make that Apple®s.

Under the new Digital Flagship initiative, Ohio State has partnered with Apple to distribute iPads and supporting accessories at no cost to first-year students, offer coding curriculum and create an iOS design lab for students and community members.

Nearly a year after Ohio State announced the partnership with the tech giant, pilot programs, training sessions and planning have led to this point.

More than 11,000 first-year students have received their iPads or will get them this week. About 180 faculty members, instructors and advisers have been trained under the initiative and are incorporating the iPads and Apple technology into courses. About 2,000 students are enrolled in iPad-required courses this fall.

“This is where the fun starts,” said Cory Tressler, Ohio State’s director of learning programs and leader of its Digital Flagship initiative.

Adviser Max Gulick will teach his first-year-student survey course in Newark this semester using iPads and the Digital Flagship training he received. He will no longer have to rely on worksheets and packets in his course, which guides students through their course requirements and the scheduling process.

“It’s totally revised the way I do my job as an adviser and as a teacher,” Gulick said.
For each iPad-required course offered this fall, there also must be a non-iPad section available for students, Tressler said.

English lecturer Angie Romines will teach an iPad-required section of her online English course this semester.

"Because my course works with primary sources like images and videos, I'm really hoping it will be kind of a good partnership there," Romines said.

Other educators, though, continue to keep their classes free of screens.

Trevon Logan, an economics professor and faculty fellow in the College of Arts and Sciences, implemented a technology ban in his economics courses last spring, allowing students to ask for an exemption to the policy if they wanted.

He was pleased with the results, seeing better student performance, particularly on the first midterm exam, over previous courses in which he'd allowed technology. A number of students gave positive feedback about the no-technology policy in course evaluations, Logan said.

"We really should be using technology if it's increasing student interaction or increasing student outcomes, or at least not making them worse," Logan said.

He plans to continue the policy this year, although he was still considering some modifications about requests for exemptions to make things easier for students with disabilities who might rely on technology.

Although Logan promotes the need to think critically about the best uses of technology in the classroom, he still thinks the Digital Flagship initiative will be a net benefit for Ohio State.

"Apple's going to set up ... the ability for us to go and have students develop apps right here on campus," Logan said. "And that's just absolutely amazing."

Educators agree that the Digital Flagship partnership has helped level the playing field for students. The university is paying $11.1 million over four years to equip the incoming freshman class with an Apple iPad Pro, Apple Pencil and Smart Keyboard, iPad case, software and an AppleCare protection plan, all at no cost to the students.
Still, some instructors incorporating the iPads are being careful not to rely too heavily on the technology, which students might not always have access to when they graduate — whether they won’t have the latest model of a device or can’t afford them later on their own.

“I kind of think about the cost of Apple products, which isn’t an issue now, (but) are these products still going be accessible?” Romines said.

She’s trying to make sure she’s using apps in her courses that aren’t solely available on Apple products.

“I don’t want to push them towards this technology that won’t necessarily be there for them if they can’t afford it,” Romines said.

An iOS design lab for the area of 15th Avenue and North High Street is in the works, but in the short term, Ohio State is developing a mobile iOS lab, retrofitting a bus-type vehicle to offer consultations, app workshops and coding training, Tressler said.

The school hopes to have the mobile lab ready around mid-November, and to continue to use it even after the permanent iOS lab is completed in 2019. In addition to programming around Ohio State’s main campus in Columbus and its regional campuses, the university also hopes to get the mobile iOS lab into the community, at its county extension offices or at local startup companies, for example.

“We want to use this as an engagement tool or vehicle to get out to the greater Ohio community,” Tressler said. “This part is so needed and such a good outreach tool that we want to keep it going.”

jsmola@dispatch.com

@jenmsmola