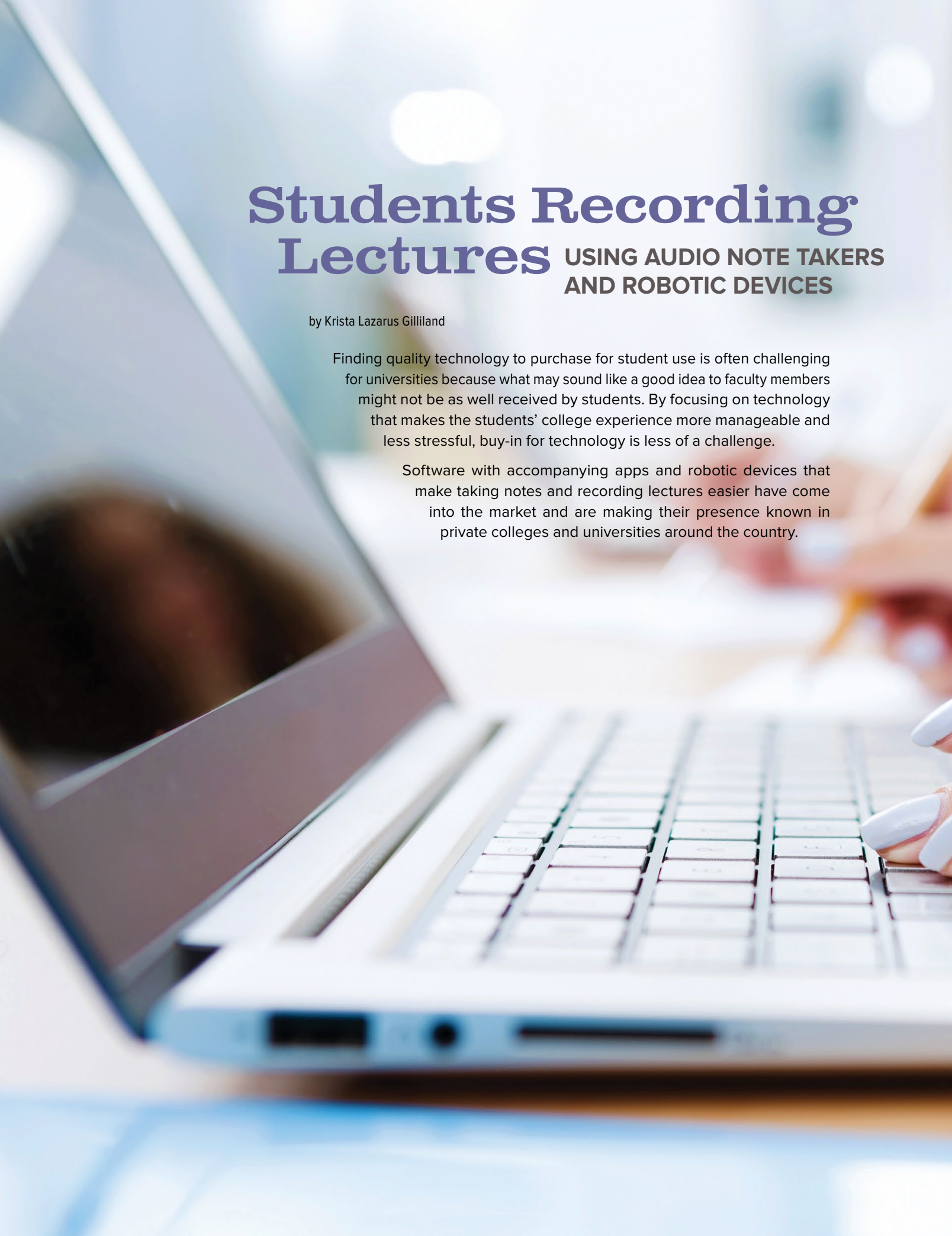
Students Recording Lectures

USING AUDIO NOTE TAKERS AND ROBOTIC DEVICES

by Krista Lazarus Gilliland

Finding quality technology to purchase for student use is often challenging for universities because what may sound like a good idea to faculty members might not be as well received by students. By focusing on technology that makes the students' college experience more manageable and less stressful, buy-in for technology is less of a challenge.

Software with accompanying apps and robotic devices that make taking notes and recording lectures easier have come into the market and are making their presence known in private colleges and universities around the country.



Improving Note Taking and Study Skills: Audio Note Takers

Many students do not have the required skills to be good note takers because they are forced to complete too many varied tasks at once in order to compile good information for studying at a later time. Note taking requires that students listen to the lecture, read and study presentation materials, write down any key information that they hear, and then make meaningful use of that information by relating it to things they already know.

Picking what is important out of a lecture can be fairly challenging for students who do not enter the classroom with these skills. By providing audio note taking technology to help students learn the study skills and improve their note taking abilities, students are able to revisit the lectures and get the help they need with adding annotations and finding key details within the lesson.

The Office of Accessibility at Birmingham Southern University in Alabama recently piloted a note taking software that enables students to record lectures and piece the audio recording together with the presentation from the professor. This program allows students to gather all of the information they learn during class and combine it to make an annotated, organized series of notes for each class they take.

This type of note taking software would help universities meet the academic accommodations required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and could be implemented as part of a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or their 504 plan for medical accommodations. The benefit of such software is that it organizes the information for the students, making all information from a class easily accessible, color coded, and annotated for students to review at a later time.

According to Nikki Cohron, Instructional Technologist at Birmingham Southern College, students may enter the classrooms with devices such as smartphones, laptops, and tablets to take notes, and with specialized software and apps, they are able to add their written notes alongside any pictures or slides provided by the professor.

She states, "At the end of class, students will have an audio, aligned with professor notes, aligned with personal notes." The app converts the audio recording into chunks of text that students can highlight, allows them to add their own notes, and provides them with notes worth studying before an exam or research assignment.

Improving the Art of Teaching: Robotic Devices

Schools of Education have a unique problem that requires an incredibly innovative solution. Students at the Orlean Beeson School of Education at Samford University in Birmingham, AL, have access to robots that help them record their own lectures in preparation for becoming successful teachers.

This new robotic technology has made recording classroom experiences much easier for the teacher candidates. It allows for teacher candidates to record audio and video of their lessons. With this digital record of a teacher candidate's classroom instruction, students

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are provided the chance to perfect their craft of delivering lessons through reflection and personal observation. These recorded lectures can be used as part of their edTPA portfolio as well as for individual classroom assignments.

Michele Haralson, Ph.D., the Director of Curriculum Materials and the Technology Center, notes that students receive training on the device in the early stages of their degree program, and then they practice using it in their required technology classes.

Haralson states, "The device is accessed through the Curriculum Materials and Technology Center. It is 'checked out' through the Education Library, like a book would be." Students may check the device out for 24 hours before it needs to be returned. She is also available to answer any questions and to provide tech support for any student who needs it.

Teacher Candidates are able to attach their cellular devices to the robot, and, while they record their lessons, the robot is able to use digital markers to turn and record the teacher candidates as they move around the classroom. The device can come with one or more microphones to help record the teacher, small groups within a classroom, or both simultaneously. These microphone markers can also be activated, allowing the robot to turn and focus the video on each particular group of students in a classroom.

There is software that accompanies the robot that allows the teacher candidate to edit what they submit. The software provides a cloud sharing service for students to setup and manage, so that they can successfully share their videos with professors and all required e-portfolio assignment submissions. Teacher candidates are encouraged to view their own submissions and reflect upon their rapport with students and their classroom management.

Investing in Students

By providing students with the tools they need to be successful, colleges and universities are able to help their students become more independent and reflective of the lectures and presentations that they encounter or even present. Investing in technology that solely benefits the students, such as audio note takers and lecture capture robots, can improve their rates of success in the classroom.

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