



Minutes of the Computing Advisory Committee

May 11 , 1999

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Those attending: JP Dunn, Patti Cosgrove (for Al Allen), Steve Etcheson, Brad Willke, Susan Logue (for Carolyn Snyder), Duke Koch, Geoff Nathan (recorder), David Blakesley, Pierre Barrette

1) Geoff reported that the Y2K desktop initiative had ground to a halt as students ran out of free time to volunteer their efforts. In addition, Mary Wallace's internship ends May 15 and a new coordinator needs to be chosen. She and Geoff met with Vice Chancellor Jackson, (future) Vice Chancellor Guernsey and Vice Chancellor Tweedy. They were persuaded to fund approximately one thousand hours of student work and three months of GA funds for a coordinator. Geoff will be responsible for keeping everything running.

2) Faculty Desktop Replacement Plan

Geoff had heard that some questions had been raised about the plan passed by the committee. These included whether individual departments (or perhaps colleges) should be required to come up with some matching funds. Other questions included whether it was indeed the case that every faculty member needed a new computer every three years, and whether there would be some centralized oversight on the spending of this money. Finally, the question was apparently raised whether the University had an obligation to supply its faculty with computers in the first place.

Discussion of these points followed. Some asked how computer-literate we wanted our students to be. There was general agreement that computers are now basic communications and research devices, without which one cannot be a scholar. It was also pointed out that technology was an IBHE priority. Others pointed out that three years is a maximum for useful life cycle, and that computers have become a priority for K-12 as well. It was also mentioned that Total Cost of Ownership increases with older machines, so that it may well be a false economy to keep old machines running. In addition, older computers will not run current software, which we need to be teaching our students.

A more difficult question was possible funding sources. Some suggested decreasing somewhat the amount of the per faculty member grant and requiring departmental 'earnest money'. There followed a discussion about possible supplementary fees, such as COBA is proposing, but these could not be used to purchase faculty computers.

Although not mentioned in our proposal we were reminded that there was need for an infrastructure

replacement plan as well, and Al Allen was asked to supply some figures for such a plan.

3) Centralized Software Purchases

Everyone agrees that this would be a good idea, but the problem is who will coordinate such a plan. Olga Weidner currently manages site licenses for Autodesk, SPSS and SAS, but others pointed out that the Purchasing office knows about what software is being bought. However, probably neither IT nor Purchasing should make the ultimate recommendation on which software should be site-licensed.

Another, related question that came up was whether there could be a clearing house for previewing software. In addition, there seemed to be some interest in a similar facility for hardware.

Some suggested that the ideal situation would be to have the site-licensed software on a central server. If possible we will invite Steve Daron to a future meeting to talk about issues that might be involved with software site licenses.

Since a number of issues have been raised, it was suggested that we meet in smaller subcommittees and report back. We will institute these committees at the next meeting, which is set for May 26 at 2 in the Dean's Library Conference Room.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

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