Standards For Purchasing Classroom Technology Equipment

Policy 910

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4.1 Standards for Purchasing Classroom Technology Equipment

4.1.1 Purchasing standards exist in order to provide reasonable and sustainable support for classroom technology equipment, to insure that users are purchasing appropriate configurations on common platforms, and to maintain an appropriately current infrastructure. Through the use of a faculty survey and consultation with distributed campus support staffs, three standard tiers of technology components have been identified to meet classroom needs that range from minimal equipment to integrated computer, control and video equipment. Each tier is constructed using an approach to optimize the consistency of user interface among classrooms, thus easing the tasks of training users and supporting their use of the technologies. These standards are reviewed frequently and are adjusted as new needs are identified and emerging, pedagogically important technologies become available. Nearly daily contact with university faculty and staff enable the university’s information technology professionals to remain aware of end-user needs and to guide the technology implementation process.

4.1.2 Departments considering the purchase of classroom technology with university funds or through grants should contact the computer consultant responsible for their respective area or the technical support hotline. A responsible consultant will review configuration options with the requesting department to best fit the intended classroom use and to coordinate the acquisition, installation, and support strategy for the classroom.

4.1.3 A website is being developed to document the procedures, identify the distributed and central consulting contacts, list the current standard configurations, and provide additional background material.

4.1.4 Departmental representatives having any questions about their options should contact their area consultant or the technical support hotline at 828-262-6266.

4.2 Possible Pilot Project Approach To Confirm Equipment Selection, Use And Support

4.2.1 Deploying classroom technology standards should involve serious consideration of the following issues in order to garner the needed departmental and college buy-in and to remain sustainable over the long term:

1. a well-publicized pilot deployment to help identify projected support and funding needs and to plan for an eventual full-scale implementation
2. a process for prioritizing need for retro-fitting older classrooms and outfitting new rooms
3. a training structure to support (a) the technologies themselves and (b) the pedagogical models to employ them effectively
4. an advisory body, comprising mainly active teaching faculty, to assist in the development of the aforementioned training structure, to identify and promote pedagogically appropriate "best technologies and practice,” and to conduct ongoing program assessments
5. a central organization to coordinate the maintenance, repair, and monitoring efforts of central and/or distributed support personnel and to maintain a repository of replacement and repair parts
6. a means for routing all purchase requests for classroom technologies through the standards process
7. a means for ensuring that approved standards are incorporated in new construction and remodeling projects
The success of the pilot (as well as a future full deployment) will depend heavily on the quality of feedback from users and on our ability to address (with appropriate resources) the concerns or obstacles their feedback identifies. During a pilot phase, we should take the opportunity to identify the resource streams and support mechanisms that eventually allow us to scale the process to equitably encompass the overall campus environment. We can expect that during a pilot project, and likely for a couple of years, maintenance issues will be rather limited in scope (due to provision of equipment that will not have neared its service lifetime) -- that interval should provide a window during which to plan for the needed training, support, and preventive maintenance mechanisms for a full-scale program and to project staffing needs commensurate with the expansion of the pilot to the campus at large.