

MEMORANDUM

TO: Ronald Sudol

FROM: Gary Moore, Chair, Academic Computing Committee

DATE: May 27, 2005

Subject: 2004-2005 Annual Report of the Academic Computing Committee

Members of the Academic Computing Committee: Cathryn Cheal, James Dow, Anne Hitt, Mark Iskden, Cindy Sifonis, Hemant Kumar Mahamwal (Student), James Martin (Student), Kieran Mathieson, Gary Moore (Chair), Zissimos Mourelatos, George Preisinger, Theresa Rowe, Robert Slater, Ronald Srodawa, John Tinkham (Student), Yang Xia.

During the 2004-2005 academic year, the Academic Computing Committee (ACC) accomplished a number of activities. These included the development a deployment of a campus wide classroom technology survey to all faculty in the university. The committee also considered the possible discontinuation of dial-up service to faculty and staff, and a potential solution to the sharing of information concerning research software available on campus. There was some discussion about the need to continue the dial-up service for those faculty who relied on it for their research and teaching roles in the university, but there was no final resolution. The committee did not see this as a major issue, as long as advance notice was given and alternatives suggested for those faculty and staff who still use this service. The committee came to the conclusion that a research software listserv would be the best way to allow collaboration between researchers on campus about computing solutions available for data analysis. The chair was charged with seeking funding for this listserv with the Research and Sponsored Programs Office. Unfortunately, this did not happen this year and will need to be pursued early in the next academic year by the chair of the committee after consultation with the committee.

By far the biggest undertaking of the committee was the development and deployment of an online survey of all faculty concerning classroom technology. George Preisinger, Cathy Cheal and Terrie Rowe spearheaded this project, but there were substantial contributions to various aspects of the project by all remaining members of the committee. The [final results](#) of the survey are available online for viewing by all members of the university community. Terri Rowe prepared a summary of the survey which served to focus discussion of the committee. This summary is included at the end of this report. The committee felt that this information would help to decide on priorities related to classroom equipment necessary for student learning in the foreseeable future.

Summary of the Faculty Survey on Technology in the Classroom Findings

The following report was prepared and presented to the committee by Theresa Rowe on April 6, 2005. It served as a focus for discussion of these issues at subsequent meetings of the full Academic Computing Committee.

The Senate Academic Computing Committee conducted a survey of faculty during the winter semester. The survey focused on technologies used for classroom and online instruction. This is a summary of findings based on both question responses and comments.

- Faculty showed strong interest in personal support and support contact points, such as readily available classroom technology support staff, technically capable support staff, workshops, and individual technical consultations.
- A significant percentage of faculty – more than half – indicated a preference for whiteboards over chalkboards. This is important because chalk dust interferes with effective performance and shortens the lifespan of technical equipment. We need to plan carefully to let go of chalkboards in key areas where it is appropriate and where we want a significant technology presence.
- Faculty demonstrated strong preference for a technical classroom containing video / data projectors, ceiling mounted, turned on by remote, with screens that do not block the whiteboard. There is significant interest in adding a document camera to this model.
- 79% of the faculty responded with strong interest in fixed station classroom computers built into the instructor stations with an Internet connection. There was less interest in faculty laptops for this purpose.
- Given the response for mounted video / data projectors and fixed stations classroom computers, and additional related comments, the current OU model of having a mixed classroom technology tiers not serving faculty, and in fact is disruptive to the teaching experience. Faculty cannot plan on having the same technology from term to term, as classroom assignments change. Faculty seem to be designing classroom technology to the lowest common denominator that they can count on from term to term. The uncertainty of knowing where you will be teaching and what technology will be available is an obstacle to fully implementing technology in the classroom. The mix of technology may impact part time faculty even more than full time faculty, due to the changing room assignments. OU may be better able to assist faculty by providing one or two standard technology configurations in classrooms, so that faculty can count on technology for classroom delivery. Remote classroom monitoring could alleviate the situation of showing up to find network connections, bulbs or batteries not working. Varner and Wilson classrooms in particular seem to be falling behind technically, based on comments.
- About half the faculty are very interested in wireless classrooms and another 20% are somewhat interested. This interest seems to indicate that faculty perceive a different use for laptops than for the fixed computer station, or it may indicate that additional review on the purpose of laptops in the classroom is needed.

- More than half the faculty responded they were quite interested or very interested in an all campus wireless network (rather than fixed computer labs). However, there was little interest in a corresponding laptop program to facilitate connecting to the wireless network.
- Less than half the faculty responded with interest in additional fixed computer labs, additional hardware in labs or additional software in labs. However, as OU has moved to a decentralized lab model, there was strong indication that departments lack the funding or staff commitment to keep local, departmentalized labs operating at a level that meets faculty expectations. Local lab support is inconsistent, budgets and planning lack attention to cyclical replacement, and maintenance is unreliable. Faculty also seemed unaware of processes such as course fee requests to supplement cyclical replacement budgets. This situation seems particularly challenging in the College of Arts and Sciences.
- Slightly more than half the faculty answered with interest on expanding WebCT and answered with interest on expanding tools related to e-learning and WebCT. This response is higher than expected since WebCT was just upgraded last summer. We take this as a very positive sign about the acceptance of these tools and the perception of the usefulness of the tools. A follow-up question to primary users of WebCT indicated that an upgrade to WebCT is a good idea that should be pursued next year (not summer 2005).