

Computer Allocation and Replacement

PURPOSE OF POLICY

The mission of Information Technology is to empower the learner and the facilitators of learning through direct access to information and services. It is vital, therefore, for the college to address internal and external computer operations in an efficient and timely manner, and to keep abreast of ever-changing technological developments. This policy provides guidelines for systematically replacing or upgrading college computers and related equipment in order to meet the evolving needs of our college community while appropriately maximizing the useful life of all equipment.

COMPUTER ALLOCATION AND SUPPORT

The college provides and supports electronic resources and services requiring various levels of computer technology. Annually, a team consisting of the President, Vice President of Academic and Student Services and Institutional Assessment, Vice President of Community and Workforce Education and Institutional Advancement, Director of Information Technology and the Network Operations Manager reviews all requests for computers. In order to make the best and most efficient use of equipment, new computers will be placed where the greatest need exists as determined by various instructional and administrative criteria. Areas that may require higher computer specifications include, but are not limited to, staff, lab, classroom, and public access workstations requiring Internet, multimedia, CD-ROM, and online catalog capabilities.

Older computers that still meet minimum specifications will be recycled to applications requiring less computer capability, such as networked or stand-alone workstations used for word processing, print servers, or other lower level or single purpose tasks. Unless other arrangements have been made, the college IT support staff will have responsibility for the maintenance of equipment as listed within "Technology Procedures and Guidelines," a publication of the Information Services and Technology department. Computers that are deemed unusable, or that cannot be moved to another location, will be surplus.

REPLACEMENT CYCLE

Since most electronic devices have a relatively short lifespan, the purchase of computer hardware, software, and other related equipment must be seen as an ongoing expense. Other than the exceptions noted in the following paragraph, a four-year hardware replacement cycle is deemed to be acceptable in consideration of: 1) the universal adequacy of current college systems to provide employees with the basic functions of database inquiries and entries, e-mail, web research, and office automation applications as required; 2) the adoption of Microsoft Office Suite as the college's software standard along with the ability to provide employees with access to word processing, spreadsheet applications, database management, and presentation production capabilities as necessary to perform their duties; 3) the absence of anticipated college-wide implementation of software applications that would require significant or immediate upgrade of most systems; and, 4) the robust systems, reliable support, and economical extended warranty provided by the current hardware vendor.

In order to maintain a high level of quality in support of the learning college philosophy, computers in instructional labs will be replaced as necessary in order to ensure that students have the opportunity for training using the most up-to-date technology that coincides with their curriculum. Other computers will be replaced as necessary to ensure that equipment is appropriate for administrative as well as instructional applications and in recognition that an enhanced level of performance may require that some equipment be upgraded more frequently than the four-year cycle. Upgrades and replacement of servers will be considered on an individual basis.

These guidelines notwithstanding, all decisions regarding purchase of new equipment will be determined by the availability of funds, and will take into consideration whether needs justify costs.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Specifications for replacement or expansion will meet or exceed the minimum standard for hardware as described within the Information Services and Technology publication, "Technology Procedures and Guidelines." The college works in collaboration with other agencies and businesses and values these partnerships. To facilitate the electronic exchange of information and create a smooth workflow, the college considers and uses specifications and minimums published by the partnering entities. These partnerships include but are not limited to the: DOE [Department of Education] requirements for Financial Aid; SO [System Office] requirements for the Colleague system; ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] requirements; BB&T requirements for direct deposit; LSTA [Library Services & Technology Act] guidelines for library computers; and PLATO requirements for ESL [English as a Second Language] labs. Whenever possible, computers and related equipment will be purchased to take advantage of savings provided through volume discounts, and, when possible, the college will use vendors who are on State Contract.

POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Director of Information Technology and may be modified to meet evolving technology requirements or the changing needs of the college.

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