Northern Virginia Community College
Information Technology Committee Meeting
December 11, 2015
Via WebEx


Email Policy Workgroup

Tentative Membership and timeline; Dr. Sachs has tentative membership for the email policy workgroup. He has held off getting the group started awaiting clarity on the conversion to cloud email. Let Dr. Sachs know if additional people would like to serve on the group.

Conversion to Cloud email

Update on the cloud email conversion and complications. Converting to cloud email is a VCCS mandate. It is an expensive undertaking and does not fully replace our present system. Because of our size it requires a hybrid system of local as well as cloud email. Allen Sinner provided further explanation of why we would need a hybrid system. The cost to NVCC will end up being higher than the VCCS expected. We are checking to see if we can get an exemption to going to the cloud because of the cost. If we are not exempt, the conversion will be done in the spring.

Data Center Co-location with VCCS

In January the VCCS moved into a real data center in Richmond. Their back up data center was near Roanoke. A new backup center has been contracted in Northern VA, which we can share as our data center. We will still have our data center at the Annandale campus. The changeover will start after the first of the year, with no real disruption for end users. Our cost analysis on the shared data center shows an annual savings of $28,000, as well as other benefits.

Budget Reductions

To address some college budget issues, we have had to make some cuts to the initial technology plan budget. The technology plan budget has been cut to help meet NVCC’s reduction target. The cuts are $572,000 this year and $490,000 next year. The cuts are projected to come from classroom refresh savings, individual campus technology funds (next year), salary savings from the hiring freeze, the data center colocation will cost less, ImageNow VCCS conversion, cloud conversion if we convert this year, and tentative classroom scheduling software (to replace R25).

Annual Student/Faculty Technology Surveys

We had been doing student/faculty technology surveys up until a few years ago. We have not done it for several years to avoid conflict with VCCS surveys or other college surveys, but have to start doing them again. The last one we did was done by email and that carries some bias on the responses we get. We want to do the next one in classrooms (and email for ELI sections) to get a better sample. That
means the survey needs to be much shorter than our last email survey. Dr. Sachs shared the proposed
draft student survey for 2015-16 based on the last survey we did. We will want to finalize the questions
for this year’s survey so we can work with OIR to have it administered in classrooms late
January/February. Administering the survey in the classroom will solve the problem of students not
responding because they don’t read email or don’t have computers at home. The faculty survey is
based on the student survey. Dr. Sachs asked for feedback on the proposed questions. There were
suggestions for additional questions on availability of computers at home, and on use of mobile
technology. There was discussion on whether to add a question to the technology survey for faculty on
what type of computers we should be providing. The feeling was that question should be asked apart
from the technology survey.

Use of expensive alternatives to standard laptops

For many years we have standardized on desktops and laptops. A standard is needed in order to
maximize costs, benefits, maintenance of the computers, and to support users. While there have always
been lighter weight and fancier computer options at higher cost, use of these required strong
justifications. We are starting to see a push from individuals who want to have a computer and a
Microsoft Surface Pro, or just a Microsoft Surface Pro. We need to revisit the issue, especially in light of
the budget issues it presents. The surface pro does not provide all the functionality of the basic laptop,
and it cost $300-500 more. It is more than just people spending their own money, especially when there
is not enough money for many more important projects. There is a significant behind the scenes cost to
maintaining multiple platforms. Dr. Sachs provided the specifications of the Surface Pro 4 and the basic
laptops we ordered last year for comparison. Among the significant differences are that the Surface Pro
has a smaller hard drive, only works on wireless, and cannot connect to a docking station. On the other
hand, it is 2-3 pounds lighter. The committee agreement was unanimous that we should only approve
Surface Pro 4s as “replacement for desktops” if there is a functional need, and not convenience only.
Departments buying a few for check out purposes would be appropriate.

New Business

A question came up on replacing some Dell computers in computer labs with Mac Minis and taking
advantage of the trade-in-credit. Dr. Sachs clarified that it is to provide students with more options and
was totally a campus choice. Because of the trade-in-credit it brings the cost of the Mac Minis
comparable to a Dell.

A question came up about flat panel replacements in classroom, and resolution problems. Again, it is a
campus decision to install flat panels and Dr. Sachs was not aware of specific reasons at the campuses
for those decisions. We refresh basic classroom equipment every 5 years to include projectors.

Dr. Sachs discussed the centrally funded academic software request that just went out and are due end
of January. We have been able to fund all the requests in previous years. If we find that is not true this
year he will bring it back to the committee for guidance.

Dr. Sachs inquired if Fridays work for ITC meetings. It seemed that Friday is ok. He will verify that with
the committee in early January before scheduling the next meeting.

Question regarding change to new Windows version. Dr. Sachs clarified that we do not routinely
upgrade office machines since the computer refreshes usually come with newer version. It is totally a
campus decision as to when to upgrade labs as needed for teaching purposes. Typically we do not change until the 1st service pack comes out on the software. Faculty teaching the software can have it as soon as it is available.

The meeting adjourned.