Information Technology Committee Meeting  
April 4, 2014  
Held Electronically

Present: Steve Sachs, Mark Beattie, Bruce Ghofrany, Jennifer Lerner, Cathy Simpson, Angela Terry, Julia Turner, Frances Villagran-Glover, Bo Yang, April De La Rosa, Brian Foley, Bernard Schmidt, Allen Sinner

The planned March 7 meeting was not held.

Dr. Sachs outlined the items for consideration at today’s meeting. The FY15 Technology Plan Budget will be discussed and resulting draft will be forwarded widely to college groups. Questions have been raised regarding Windows 7, 8, 9 and Microsoft Office 365.

The April 18 meeting needs to be moved to April 25. Dr. Sachs will send out an email regarding that rescheduling.

Budget Drivers. The large proportion of the money in the proposed FY15 technology plan will go to maintain college technology. Required equipment replacement is 4 years for computers and 5 for classroom equipment. Dr. Sachs discussed the changes in technology over the years, its impact on college equipment and therefore the budget. There has been a 29% increase in College computers from 4 years ago—the last time the technology fee was increased. Those computers require refreshing which adds a $500,000 increase in budget for computers alone. Classroom equipment (in new buildings added over over the years and upgraded classroom capabilities) must now be refreshed, along with increased infrastructure software costs bring the technology cost increase closer to two million dollars from 4 years ago. There is less money to work with due to our flat enrollments.

Dr. Sachs went over the proposed technology budget explaining each line item regarding what it covers, what we know about its costs at present, and factors that may influence those costs. He paused for questions along the way. Server replacement is one line item that has been cut back due to budget restraints and will be compensated through various means.

Classroom equipment refresh cost approximately $11,000 per classroom not counting computers. While classrooms were refreshed on the 5 year replacement schedule, the additional of equipment and upgrades to classrooms were not done consistently across the College in the past. This created several years of large bubbles in classroom refresh costs. To cope with these costs and flatten the costs out, we will spread some of the classroom refreshes out over the summer so the costs are shifted between two fiscal years. This means that some of the classrooms will be refreshed in the Spring and some in the summer, so the result is the same for Fall classes regardless of whether they had all been done in the spring. We should be up to date and on schedule for that in a couple of years so that the annual costs for classroom refreshes is a more predictable and even amount.
The IT training line item is for central technology staff to be trained on new technologies. It is not intended for regular staff or faculty.

Expenses for major system costs was outlined and explained.

The line item for restricted positions has to be increased in order to consider a possible state bonus or salary increase.

New items for including in the tech plan budget were discussed. The emergency alert phone system is what allows us to send emergency messages to the phone system, as well as automated calls to students regarding tuition payments, etc. Flat panels are part of the emergency messaging system and periodically need replacing. Class scheduling software that would replace R25 is also an item being considered.

The proposed budget is approximately $400,000 over available funds. The budget proposal cannot go forward that far over budget. It is very difficult to find reductions based on the number of items that just maintain what we already have. One area that will need reducing is the funding to campuses for their technology plans. Dr. Sachs showed the FY 14 campus distributions and amount proposed for reduction. Two figures were illustrated: one which took out the allowance for P-14s and the other a flat 25% reduction. Dr. Sachs commented that the VP budget usually ends up covering technology expense shortfalls, but is probably not an option for next year since that budget also now goes to maintenance of existing efforts.

Dr. Sachs asked for questions from the committee regarding possible items left out. He pointed out that once the proposal goes forward it will be “as approved by the committee.” He proposed that if we receive additional funding or costs are decreased, that we reimburse by the same percentage the items we are reducing. There were no objections to that proposal.

Campus technology plans are due later in April, and from college staff units by May 1. As we have our next two meetings, we will review updated cost figures and adjust as necessary.

Instructional Software – Dr. Sachs led a discussion on what should be covered by the instructional software funding in the Technology Plan. The instructional software line item currently funds instructional software that is curriculum based and is actually used by students in classes. It does not fund experimental software, background software, or instructor-only use software. A question came up about funding tablet apps. A request was turned down this year for apps that were not directly instructional software. There is danger in increasing the academic software line item to include non-curricular apps because it would further decrease the campus allocations for campus technology plans. All academic software requests are required to come through and be submitted by the deans, rather than requested directly from instructors. The committee voted to maintain the current definition of what software is allowed for funding through the Technology Plan.
Dr. Sachs will continue to check some of the Technology Plan items and make cost corrections. The proposed budget will then be shared widely for comments and reconsidered at our meeting later in April. The refined budget proposal will be sent to Administrative Council in late May or early June for approval before being sent to the VCCS by the July 1 deadline.

Windows 7, 8 or 9 – Questions have come up regarding which version we are putting on computers. Technically at NVCC we are not supposed to be no further than two versions behind on any software. Bernie Schmidt commented that IT instructors need to plan for the upgrades in their instruction. Students are frustrated because they have different versions at home. Dr. Sachs described how we plan for operating system upgrades. We do not automatically upgrade all computers because delivered computers are delivered with a certain operating system. In the academic programs it is totally a campus decision on when to upgrade the instructional computers. Usually this around the time the first service pack comes out on a new system. The college license allows college computers to use either Windows 7 or 8, and which version is in the labs is up to the campus. The IT and other faculty should work with their campus IT staff to determine the version needed. Typically, we do not automatically upgrade the Operating System on general use and office computers. There is usually no need to do so and can create more problems that it is worth. Sometimes, toward the end of the four year life of a computer it does become necessary to do the upgrade due to Microsoft support issues, and we will do upgrades at that time. There was discussion on what the VCCS is planning and how that will affect this issue.

Microsoft Office 365 – It is strictly a cloud version that can be licensed and accessed on up to 5 devises. NOVA’s license that we presently have does not include Office 365. Now it can be accessed as read-only on all computers but documents cannot be created in it without a license. Going forward we will need to deal with licensing and the impact on funding. No one reported having licensed 365 yet. Dr. Sachs said that the system office has licensed it for their use and has been working with it for around a year. NOVA does not have plans now for converting because it has some service and feature limitations.

Revised Meeting Schedule: Move April 18 meeting to April 25. May 16 meeting as scheduled.