Northern Virginia Community College  
Information Technology Committee  
May 11, 2018  

eMeeting Minutes

Present: Christian Bartley, Barbara Canfield, Jacqueline Gage, Annette Haggray, Elizabeth Harper, Jennifer Lerner, Jill Mitchell, Steve Sachs (chair), Allen Sinner, Scott Wood

Minutes of the April 20 meeting were approved.

The primary agenda item of this meeting was to finalize the draft of the College Technology Plan for submission to Administrative Council in June. Dr. Sachs reminded the committee that this would still be just a draft plan based on our best estimates. There is still no formal budget, so the exact ETF figures are not available, and final enrollment numbers will be reviewed since the bulk of funding comes from the student technology fee. In addition, many of the cost figures from the VCCS are still not finalized. We will not have the initial VCCS cost figures until early June, with some not final until late summer. Those can have a significant impact on the planned budget.

The draft plan approved in April and sent out for comment was modified slightly for this final draft. The amount projected to refresh computers was reduced by the estimated savings of converting all Mac desktops to a 5-year refresh cycle. In addition, the amount budget for Wireless upgrades was increased from $50,000 to $75,000 based on the results of an outside survey of our wireless coverage. That survey determined that one problem causing congestion on the wireless network, even though it appeared there was capacity, had to do with the large number of personally owned older devices and personal printers on faculty and staff desktops. Those devices often only use the older lower band connection to wi-fi—leaving capacity on the higher band. To solve this problem, we will add additional access points where the survey indicated the most need. The plan was able to leave the amounts for Campus and ELI technology plans, including the one-time funds available because a number of costs were pre-paid for next year. However, if there are dramatic changes in revenue or significant cost increases from the VCCS, the campus allocations might need to be revisited. The final result of the adjustments was a surplus of approximately $169,000 to allocate.

The committee reviewed the list of items from the April meeting that were next in line for funding based on requests. The only additional recommendation from the college community based on the draft sent out in April was to providing funding for the new LMS implementation. However, there was no specific suggestion on what funding was needed for, and there is no implementation plan or timetable at this time. A lot will depend on the VCCS. The committee decided to include the funding for renewal of the Acudemia and RegisterBlast licenses, plus the annual maintenance of the Anatomage digital anatomy tables, with the proviso that this dependent on funds being available in the plan. As of now, it appears those funds would be available. Dr. Sachs pointed out that if funds were not available, the campuses could either use their technology plan funding to pay for their share or we could reduce the allocations to the campuses and still fund these three items as part of the College plan. The remaining $54,000 would be held in reserve until we had final figures from the VCCS and final figures on the actual cost of the computer refresh. If there are more funds available, the next priority for funding is to restore the Engineer position for PC Configuration support, and then LMS implementation support (though funding from other sources will likely be available for this and is unclear how this one-time funding would
actually be used effectively). The committee also agreed that any unspent funds would be used to prepay expenses to increase available funds in the FY20 plan.

As part of the review of the College Technology Plan, Dr. Sachs and Mr. Sinner pointed out why the increased funding for security approved for last year was so important. The increased risks of cyber attacks in the news affect NOVA as well. The new security software not only provides increased protection, it also improves the monitoring and tracking should anything suspicious be discovered. This helps insure we close any potential security weaknesses before a breach can occur.

Dr. Sachs explained that there would be two new items added to the technology plan to meet VCCS requirements for the plan. These are two major software systems funded from other college funds and do not affect the technology plan funding at all. One is catalog and curriculum software that allows the College to streamline the management of the catalog and curriculum descriptions. These are currently very complicated and time consuming manual processes. The second is intelligent capture software to analyze incoming digital transcripts to help automate the process of determining appropriate placement under multiple measures and appropriate credits for courses already taken elsewhere.

The committee approved the draft technology plan, priorities for funding if additional funds become available, and the use of unspent funds to prepay items in advance of the FY20 technology plan.

The committee then discussed the distribution of the Campus and ELI Technology Plan funds. Dr. Sachs explained that this is reviewed every year, and despite many attempts to find an alternative, the distribution used FTES as the basis. It was pointed out that available technology plan funds did not fully cover all the campus technology plan needs as it is, and that the available funding had already been cut last year. It was suggested that perhaps the Provosts could determine funding based on priorities; however, there was no clear indication of what those might be. Furthermore, any increase in funding for one campus would mean a decrease in funding for the others. Given the limited funding already available, the committee did not feel that this made good sense. The committee also discussed the possible impact of the new college-wide IT and Engineering Division/Program on the distribution of funding. After a great deal of discussion that there was no good way at this point to determine what Technology Plan funding might be appropriate for this new “unit”. Furthermore, any new hardware probably be funded from the Campus ETF pool and would still require coordination and collaboration with the campuses since it would involve space on those sites. Currently, the technology plan funding primarily supports shared technology, used by multiple disciplines that already include IT. Curriculum software is already provided in a different part of the technology plan. The committee decided that the FTES-based distribution was the best approach for the coming year and formally approved it.

Dr. Sachs reminded the committee members to look at the IT strategic plan materials he had sent out in April. Their task was to review the student surveys and other materials, along with the draft plan objectives developed by the committee in April looking for anything we might have missed that need to be in the final plan. Several items were discussed including voice technology and training of faculty in advanced technologies so they would be more aware of available tools. Dr. Sachs will continue to work on the plan over the summer and send out updates to committee for review and comment. The goal is to have draft to send out to the college for comment in September—even if the new Information Technology Committee has not started to meet. A final plan is needed by the end of 2018.