Providing support for all computer labs

Computing Services proposes to begin providing support for all the computer labs on campus, beginning this fiscal year (07-08). This would include providing computers, printers, paper and toner, for areas that were previously unfunded.

Computers

To accomplish this, for the areas with PCs, we will use the same “trickle down” method that we have been using in Chemistry, etc. Computers coming out of the main labs, at the end of the three-year cycle, will be put into the additional labs. We will shuffle these computers every year, as newer machines become available. This will help support the second floor of the Business building, Geology, and Student Support Services labs.

In the areas with Macintosh computers, this model does not work as well, as there currently are very few Macintosh computers in the funded areas. We simply do not have enough computers in the main labs to “trickle down”. Initially, to bring the Music lab up-to-date, we will move existing machines from the funded areas to Music. This actually involves reducing the number of computers in ES238, and moving the machines to Music. From our observations over the years, these machines have been underutilized, and the usage statistics support this. To bring the Art lab up-to-date we will purchase new machines. Machines in Art and Music will then be replaced on a three to four year replacement cycle depending on budgetary resources. The “trickle down” Macintosh machines from these new funded areas will go to provide new machines for the Biology lab. The last Macintosh area we will begin to fund is the South Coloradan. At the end of this cycle, any equipment provided through the student tech fee must be returned to Computing Services for reallocation.

Specialty hardware and software

All specialized hardware and software that the school, or department needs, will continue be the financial responsibility of the school or department hosting these labs. Examples of specialized hardware are: color printers, large format black and white printers, plotters, digital tablets, etc. Examples of specialized software are: Adobe Creative Suite, Finale, and SPSS, etc.

Printers, paper and toner

Printers coming out of the main labs will be “trickle down” to the new areas, as they become available. These areas will access the printers through the Microsoft print queues, as in the main labs, and will have Pcounter setup to count pages. Student print accounts will now be charged for printing in these labs. Computing services will provide paper (Standard 8 ½ x 11) and toner for these labs. Our goal is to standardize the printers in all the labs to reduce the number of toner cartridges we need to stock. Paper other than Standard 8 ½ x 11 is the responsibility of the department. The department, or school, needs to provide Computing Services an area (or access to an area) to store a small amount of paper and a spare cartridge that can be locked. Computing Services will not provide specialty printers, for example plotters, and color printers etc. Color printing will continue to be available in the SUB lab. Departments and schools can continue to provide non-counted printing, if they choose, as long as they provide paper and toner.
Level of support
Computing Services will provide support for these labs in conjunction with the department’s assigned Lab Manager. This level of support is flexible. For example, Math and Science staff manages almost every aspect of their lab. In others labs, like Chemistry, we manage most aspects. In other labs, like Music, we work together. This, in our opinion, is the best of both worlds. We provide the basic system configuration and work together to modify it to meet the needs of the department.

Security and server access
To prevent the spread of viruses, malware etc. basic system security precautions, and procedures, recommended by Computing Services, need to be adhered to for all computer labs on campus. Machines provided by computing services must have an authenticated login to prevent unauthorized usage. The machines must also provide the same level of access to standard applications (or an equivalent application) and must allow access to the student’s home and shared directories.

Areas that will be added
- Art department’s teaching lab on the 2nd floor
- Biology
- Business lab 2nd floor
- Geology (if they aren’t covered by a grant)
- Journalism
- Music
- Student Support Services

Computer Loans
Computers may be loaned to the Schools of Math and Science and Business, for student use, for courses on computer technology. Priority of machines’ uses go to lab replacement before loans. However, Computing Services will make a concerted effort to provide these machines. Requests for loaner computers will be addressed at the AITC meetings. Requests need to be made in advance of the class. Computing Services usually purchases machines during the April time frame. It helps scheduling if requests coincide with these purchasing and budgeting cycles. The length of the loan is typically for one semester, but may be extended, if machines are available. The number of machines to be loaned may vary with class enrollment. The exception to loaning machines is where the machine would not be returned in working order. For example, classes in which students take apart machines for hardware experience. Machines for these purposes must come from other sources. Loaner machines may be the machines removed from the labs, the “trickle downs”. Machines should be returned to Computing Services in working order.

Lab usage statistics
Computing Services will be installing LabStats clients on all computers labs on campus to gather stats on lab usage. Annually, lab usage statistics will be reviewed by the AITC. This will help the AITC to determine usage trends, and computer lab sizing needs for these labs in the future. Any increases or decreases in lab sizes will be a topic of discussion at the AITC. Any requests for additional labs, or labs machines, will also go through the AITC and should be supported by lab usage data.