**Goal**

To provide help to departments in managing their academic computing laboratories through a formal process of sharing technical knowledge and expertise in laboratory management. Services to be made available would range from assistance in installation and use of software tools and system utilities (including "hands-on" training) to documentation of lab management "best practices" and technical procedures.

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**Background**

Since the microcomputer's integration into many curricula to enhance the teaching and learning experience, many colleges and departments have struggled to provide and maintain computer-based laboratories and classrooms. The increased use by faculty of instructional technologies has created a support service crisis, as noted by the Innovative Technologies Center, which serves faculty who develop and use enhanced instructional technology in their laboratories and classrooms.

Due to limited funding available, there is insufficient technical staff available to support the many new computing laboratories on campus. Over the years various support approaches have been tried, but while progress has been made, many areas continue to need basic technical support for their computer-based facilities.

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**The Challenge**

The challenge is to meet the technical support needs of college or departmental computer-based laboratories which could benefit from the knowledge of basic procedures and principles of running an efficient computer laboratory as well as limited hands-on technical support.

The elements of a well designed and efficiently run computer lab have been distilled from many years of experience by the Office of Information Technology in the development and maintenance of both large/small and public/departmental computer-based laboratories. These elements can be documented and combined with day-to-day support options to provide the departmental labs with an opportunity to develop and expand the technical skills of staff in their areas.

The use of technology in the teaching and learning environment puts a strain on budgets in many areas. The DLABS program proposes to provide a first level of technical assistance to those departmental labs with little or no direct computing technical support. This effort will be directed towards a bootstrap approach for colleges or departments to build on for future self-supported technical expertise. Departmental labs with existing staff may benefit from the documentation and organizational structure information to be provided and would be eligible to request this type of support.

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**The Plan**

DLABS main focus will be to provide technical expertise to selected departmental computing labs on the Knoxville campus which do not have directly assigned technical support staff. Secondary levels of support may be provided to staffed labs. A yearly review process will be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and to determine if further assistance may need to be provided beyond a one year period.

To best utilize the limited resources available to this program, departmental computing labs will be selected through the yearly technology fee funding proposal and evaluation process. Requests for services will be reviewed with the Office of Academic Affairs. All proposals will be prioritized by deans and/or unit heads within colleges before submission.

The call for DLABS proposals will be included with the annual technology fee funding requests for departmental labs. Starting this year, the proposal process will run during November and December. Awards will be announced the first week in February. This
new schedule has been established to work in concert with the yearly departmental budgetary process.

The actual type of support awarded will depend on the individual needs of the requesting departmental computer lab and the resources available within the OIT organization such as the Lab Services group and other OIT groups as required.

### First Year Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>PERIOD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Call for proposals (Online only)</td>
<td>Monday, November 10, 2003 - Friday, December 12, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal priorities due (Set by Deans)</td>
<td>Monday, December 15, 2003 - Friday, December 19, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal Evaluation</td>
<td>Monday, December 29, 2003 - Friday, January 30, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Award announcements</td>
<td>Monday, February 2, 2004 - Friday, February 6, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DLABS support planning</td>
<td>February 2004 - June 2004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Begin DLABS support deployment             | July 2004                                      |

### Types of Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lab Management</th>
<th>Documentation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assistance with configuration evaluation for optimum operation.</td>
<td>Best practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance with installation and use of KeyServer and DeepFreeze software management tools.</td>
<td>Lab management techniques gleaned from actual lab experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance in the setup of standard systems configuration &quot;builds&quot; to minimize restore operations.</td>
<td>Technical shortcuts &amp; tips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and hands-on assistance in the use of computing software system tools and utilities.</td>
<td>General purpose scripts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Program Benefit

Students will have an improved educational experience with a well equipped, organized, and efficiently run computer laboratory. An enriched teaching and learning environment will result when more applications, features, and utilities are made operational due to additional technical expertise available in the academic laboratories.

### Program Timeline

**Phase I**  
**Summer 2003**

- Develop proposal process.
- Begin development of "best practices" documents and determine distribution process.
- Secure office space/acquire necessary hardware & software
Fall 2003

• Coordinate training plan and training materials.
• Develop effectiveness evaluation process.
• Select several departmental labs for Fall Pilot Project.

Phase II  
Late Fall 2003 - Early Spring 2004

• Call for proposals. [Nov-Dec]
• Evaluate proposals. [Jan]
• Announce proposal awards [Feb].
• Work with departmental labs to define technical support needs.

Spring 2004

• Provide documentation.
• Deploy technical support operations.
• Monitor program utilization and service effectiveness.

Phase III  
Summer 2004

• Begin evaluation process for program performance and effectiveness.
• Define and implement revisions to program as necessary.

Fall 2004

• Repeat Phase II and III cycles

The program outlined above should be sufficient to demonstrate the usefulness of a centrally-supported, first level support effort, such as DLABS, to provide a technical support bootstrap opportunity for colleges and departmental labs. It, however, represents only a small amount of the total commitment required to achieve optimal technical support for a campus departmental computer lab. Clearly more funds need to be made available to colleges to support the computer-based teaching and learning environment on the Knoxville campus.