

Technology Advisory Board (TAB) Minutes of Meeting of December 16, 1998

Location: AHT 4th Floor Conference Room
Time: 2:00 - 3:00PM

Members In attendance: Mark Hall, Matt Disney, Chris Hood, Rob Power, Faye Muly, Marcia Katz, Surya Singh, Ken Walker, John Moore.

Others present: Joel Dickens, Tim Johnson, Robin McNeil, Frances Fogerson.

Handouts: Table of planned computer upgrades for Residence Hall labs

Discussion 1: Network Status

Joel Dickens reported that currently six backbone nodes are up, covering all dorms except Gibbs. He expects that the network upgrades in the University Center, Dougherty, and Perkins Hall will be completed by the end of this fiscal year. Ports are being activated in Perkins at this time and should be finished by the end of January. Dougherty will be next, with equipment now in the warehouse.

In response to a question about concerns of specifications being met in Perkins, Dickens stated that there had been some subcontractor problems, but warranties are now in place, which should address that issue.

Discussion 2 - Computer Labs in Residence Halls

Muly stated that this discussion was to present information about the equipment upgrade planned for January 1999, and to discuss future planning for computer labs in the Residence Halls. Technology Fee funds have been fully allocated for this fiscal year, however, information must be collected to make decisions for the next year.

Tim Johnson representing the Residence Halls and Robin McNeil of Computing and Academic Services presented several facets of the issue.

McNeil said that she believed that students were more concerned about the quality of the computers in labs, rather than the number. Her unit is currently replacing older machines with computers relocated from other areas. These are not new computers, but are a substantial improvement over existing equipment and are fully serviceable for student applications. Additional memory has been added where needed.

McNeil distributed a handout, which indicated plans for upgrades in Residence Hall computer labs. She stated that they were trying to replace many Macs with PCs, based on student preferences.

Her view of the preferred Residence Hall lab situation would be to have three large, staffed 24-hour facilities for dorms to share. A prime consideration is that maintenance is easier with fewer, but staffed, labs. Currently, un-staffed labs appear to be subject to unqualified adjustments to equipment by untrained users. Selecting locations for labs is also important because building renovations (based on ADA requirements) can be extremely costly.

Some comments centered on having adequate desk space for each user to spread out books, folders, etc. For example, linear space in the Hodges Library Lab was contrasted with the tighter density in the Glocker lab. Lack of physical space in buildings is a very important constraint that limits many "ideal" improvements.

Johnson addressed the issue from the view of Residence Halls. Currently, he stated, computers in the lobbies are used for checking e-mail, not for general computing or homework. The Residence Hall labs are small and there is not space for a major lab expansion. He believes that there is inequity in student access to labs. Also, two-thirds of students do not have personal computers in their room and need a fully equipped lab.

Discussion focused on possible locations for a major centralized lab, with a related discussion of what were the most common computer needs of students. There was speculation that students want accessible equipment primarily for e-mail and for printing. It was recognized that two questions need to be resolved: Do students prefer large, well-appointed centralized labs or smaller, individual labs in their own dorm? To address this issue, the following are action items.

Action Items:

By the next meeting, the following information is to be collected:

1. The Student Technical Services Committee will determine student preference for several smaller, individual labs in the dorms or for one large, staffed lab.
2. Tim Johnson will inspect dorms to determine if there is space available to create a large staffed lab.

The next meeting will be on January 20, 1999 at 2:00 PM in the 4th floor conference room of Andy Holt Tower.

Minutes prepared by: Frances Fogerson