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Laptop Program for Students and Faculty

Initial Analysis Report

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Purpose

The Department of Information Technology has been asked to develop plans for student and faculty laptop programs to be implemented for the fall 2007 semester. This document is the result of a great deal of research and many preliminary brainstorming sessions within the Information Technology department. Based on this initial analysis, we have developed some recommendations for how the campus should proceed with the development of such a program. Those recommendations are included in this report.

Goals

An important first step is to have a clear understanding of the project's goals. Listed here are some of the potential goals that IT identified in the brainstorming sessions:

- Increase enrollment
- Facilitate student retention
- Enhance the teaching and learning process at IU Kokomo
- Increase the value of being a student at IU Kokomo
- Differentiate the campus from its competition
- Provide ubiquitous "anywhere, anytime" technology access to faculty and students.
- Reduce costs associated with printing
- Reallocate technology fees to support hi-tech services and infrastructure
- Improve the overall IT environment at IU Kokomo
- Improve and automate existing business processes

IT's Vision for a Successful Laptop Program

As internal discussion and research into the possibility of implementing a laptop program for faculty and students occurred, we found a great deal of information regarding other schools' implementation of similar programs. A consistent theme that emerged was that 'putting laptops in the hands of students only guarantees a laptop program exists.' In order to provide a laptop program that is successful (i.e. provides educational benefit to students and assists in streamlining the business processes of campus) the project must go much further than simply distributing laptops. In other phases of the project, technology fees and other campus funding must be used for infrastructure upgrades and improved IT services that support teaching and learning as well as the business functions of campus.

In recent years, technology has proliferated. Students entering college today expect 24x7 access to online services. In order to leverage the laptop program to its fullest, thus providing the most value for the student investment, IU Kokomo must continue to improve the online self-service business processes available to students through OneStart. Departments who schedule resources (e.g. Library, A\V) should work with IT to convert their services to online accessible services. This will also serve to increase the efficiency of the units involved. Paper forms currently used across campus should be converted to web-based services, allowing a student to leverage his laptop investment and providing greater convenience.

Another factor contributing to the success of a laptop program is the institution's ability to provide training and support for the faculty's imaginative use of the technology in the classroom. Likewise, given the training, a concerted effort must be made to prepare curriculum for an electronic classroom environment. If the perceived benefit to the student is low due to minimal usage in the classroom environment, the program will fall far short of its goals.

In short, the vision of a successful laptop program would consist of an IU Kokomo campus where students are able to leverage their personal laptop to interact and communicate with faculty and staff and utilize online services to complete administrative and academic processes. Each student will be equipped with the IT toolset that their academic school or department feels best meets the requirements of the curriculum being taught.

Considerations for IT

It is important to note at the outset, that IT is currently developing a five-year strategic plan. A significant portion of this plan is devoted to the foundational elements needed to support technology initiatives such as a laptop program. In fact, a laptop program was one of the potential strategic initiatives that we had in mind as the strategic plan was being developed. We anticipated that such a plan might be a possibility in the future; however, we didn't anticipate that a request would occur this soon.

For IT, there are two fundamental changes that must occur before a student laptop program can be implemented. First, there must be some significant upgrades to the infrastructure. Most obvious, is the need for pervasive wireless coverage across the campus. We are currently working on a project that will achieve that goal; however, even in the best-case scenario, that would not be completed before summer of 2007. Further, it is important to know that there are also some less-obviously infrastructure changes that must be made. These are being discussed and documented but, at this point in time, no project to accomplish these infrastructure updates is underway.

The second critical component for IT is a change to our support model. Currently we are staffed and have in place procedures to support approximately 400 desktop computers that we own and over which we have complete control. A student laptop program would require a shift to supporting 1200 laptops that we neither own nor control. Again, such a change in the support model has been discussed and planned within the IT department, but this change is not currently underway.

As noted in the previous section, if we require each student to have a laptop and provide nothing more than what we provide now in the way of services, the program will fail. It is imperative that the laptop become an integral part of the student's experience both in the classroom and outside of the classroom. This will require the development of many new services. It has been suggested that Tech Fee funds be used to subsidize the cost of a laptop program. This is not, in our opinion, a possibility as those funds will be needed for the support and development activities described in the preceding section.

After our initial analysis, the following IT-related issues have been identified:

- IT Infrastructure - Wireless
- Technology training for students
- Technology training for faculty
- IT Support Model
- Vendor Selection
- How do we deploy software we own to a fleet of computers we don't own?
- How do we ensure that a student has their laptop secured, patched, protected
- Does IU Kokomo manage the program or do we have a vendor do that?
- Should students purchase or lease the laptop or should they have the option?

Considerations for Other Campus Departments

Though the staff of the Department of Information Technology doesn't presume to have a complete understanding of the roles and responsibilities of *all* departments on campus, the initial analysis provided insight to some issues that *will* involve other campus departments. While there may be many more issues that we have not identified, the current list is:

- Formulation of educational rationale for the technology
- Set unambiguous expectations regarding technology adoption
- Curriculum-Technology integration
- Finance considerations
- Power Infrastructure
- Program Marketing
- Legal Issues
- Program Registration
- Program Assessment
- How will this truly impact enrollment\retention
- Do we allow students to choose a Mac notebook? If so, is that an option for faculty as well?
- Do we roll out all at once or over a period of time? If so, how long?
- Which students will be affected?
- Will we alienate non-traditional students?

Stakeholders

Even when considering just the preliminary list of considerations outlined above, it is clear that a *successful* laptop program for students and faculty is more than just an “IT Project.” It involves nearly all units on campus. For example, the program will need to be marketed and financed. Student services will need to be developed but, most importantly of all, the faculty will need to integrate the use of the laptop into their classes. Below is a list of the stakeholders that we have identified with a brief description of what we see as their stake in this project.

Stakeholder	Stake
Bookstore	E-books? Potential distribution unit for Laptops.
Financial Aid	Financially disadvantaged students
Information Technology	Training for students, development of services, infrastructure upgrades
CTLA	Training for Faculty
Library	E-books?
Human Resources	Faculty laptop program?
OCM	Program marketing
Purchasing	Vendor relations
Physical Plant	AC power remediation, classroom furniture
Academic Units	Curriculum development
Bursar	Billing
Registrar	Registration in laptop program for students

Recommendations

1. Creation of Laptop Program Task Force

Our recommendation is that a task force of the stakeholders listed above be created, though not all stakeholders will be involved in the entire project. Based on the project timeline, certain stakeholders will be involved at particular points in the project; however, it is important to bring all stakeholders together for an initial meeting. That initial meeting of the task force would be a discussion of the following items:

- What are the projects goals?
- Are there stakeholders not represented (i.e., who isn't in the room and should be)?
- What are the issues that need to be addressed?
- Should this project be considered in phases?
- What is a reasonable timeline for the project?

2. Conduct Site Visits

Further, we suggest some site visits to other campuses that have laptop programs. Some relatively close ones that we are aware of are:

- Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology
- Indiana State University

3. Revise Implementation Dates

Lastly, given all the above, the fall of 2007 is not a realistic implementation date. In addition, students are making decisions right now about where they will attend this fall and we have no opportunity to market a laptop program as a reason for choosing IU Kokomo. More importantly, we cannot surprise the students when they arrive this fall with a laptop program that they weren't aware of when they made their decision to attend IU Kokomo. A more realistic target implementation date is the fall of 2008. That will give a year to develop a program and adequately publicize it.