Computer Fees in Universities

This work was compiled by Saweda Liverpool and Cliff Missen

Executive Summary

As the use of information communication technology (ICT) on campuses increases, institutions are striving to provide the best possible ICT systems for their staff and students. Over the years, the cost of developing and maintaining ICT systems has required institutions to resort to complex and well thought out strategies to ensure that their ICT systems are sustainable.

This report is a compilation of facts and figures on trends with regards to the imposition of ICT fees by various institutions in developed countries. It is also a collection of information on ICT systems development and use by some of these institutions.

It is very crucial for academic institutions to realize that the development and running of an efficient ICT system requires carefully thought our plans. It involves a process of determining the amount of fees to charge students, the nature of those fees (e.g. one lump sum for computer use, or one lump sum and then payment for additional services like printing, etc) and the ways these computer fees are used in these institutions. The goal of this report is to furnish institutions/organizations with some guidelines from which specific and contextually appropriate plans and strategies can be developed.

The 12th National Survey on Computing and Information Technology in US higher education revealed that between 1994 and 2001, the use of email in classroom instruction has increased from less than 10% to about 63%. Over the same period, the use of Web pages for disseminating course materials rose from 7% to about 35%, while the use of Web simulations increased from about 9% to 18% and the use of ICT in course presentations and handouts rose from about 15% to 45%. As well, the survey demonstrated that the use of Internet resources for faculty and student research rose from about 11% to 43% between 1995 and 2000.

In 1997, the average ICT fee was $5.96 per credit for public universities. However, according to the Campus Computing Project, in the year 2001 the average ICT fee paid by students in public and private universities is $197. (The University of Iowa, for example, charges $140). For public and private 4-year colleges, the average fee is $245 and $282 respectively. For community (two-year) colleges, the average ICT fee is $164.

Interestingly, the imposition of computer fees at universities in The United States has been met by little or no opposition from students. This seems to be as a result of the institutions involving students to guide the process of determining and spending these fees. This strategy appears to have given the students an opportunity to fully understand how much it cost their institutions to provide the ICT services. Furthermore students felt that their opinions mattered and that their contributions were considered meaningful.

One issue of increasing importance in institutions of higher learning is access to dial-up facilities. Eighty-four percent of public universities provide dial-in ISP services for their students. (Students at the other 16% use local, private sector ISPs.) Of these, 60% provide it for free. In the case of private universities, 62% provide dial-in access and 43% of these provide it for free.

Also included in this report is a survey of how computer fees are used in the various institutions, revealing a list of common recommendations for providing ICT services to students:

1. Provide hardware and software for student computer labs, including in some cases specialized software and laptops
2. Hire personnel to support students in labs and faculty in classrooms
3. Upgrade server support in student computer labs
4. Upgrade infrastructure
5. Increase online courses
6. Enhance classrooms with technology
7. Improve remote connectivity

Full Report

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There is no doubt that there has been an increase in the use of technology on campuses around the world. Universities are constantly faced with financial challenges as they attempt to provide more and better ICT services for students and faculty. Over the years most educational institutions in the United States of America and around most parts of the developed world appear to have adopted a system of fee imposition (directly or indirectly) to aid the process of the development and maintenance of their Information technology systems. However, in most cases, given the nature of the components of the Information technology structure, (computer networks, user support services, software and content licenses, computer labs and instructional classrooms) universities still need more than just student fees to be viable and reliable.

Several Universities have developed ICT plans and policies over the years which have guided them in the process of improving their ICT services. (See Appendix for more information and Links) The provision of ICT facilities for staff and students is never cheap. The provision of the necessary infrastructure is in itself very expensive and yet these have to be maintained. Furthermore, for most universities, who desire to ensure that their students work with the most recent and up to date computer software and models, there is even a greater cost. The general point of view from most institutions of higher learning is that it is worth it. At some universities, the ICT fee is just built in as part of the student fees while in others it is specifically stated as ICT/computer fees. At some universities like the West Pilbara College of TAFE (which is a technical and further education institution in Australia), computer access is provided free of charge to all currently enrolled students (where currently enrolled means you have paid all required fees). If not currently enrolled, the cost to enroll for computer access is $20 for six months access plus the college enrolment fee of $20. However, the cost to enroll for Internet access is $30 for one month's access, plus the college enrolment fee of $20 (if not already currently enrolled). In recent times, budget cuts have greatly affected universities and leave them searching for ways to continue to provide efficient ICT services. It is expected that those universities not charging fees will probably have to do so while those currently charging will have to increase the amount of the fee. Even with the increase in computer fees, most institutions will still not be able to meet the financial requirements. This just goes to show the financial implication of a well developed and maintained ICT system. Understanding the basic economics of information technology is a logical and necessary step toward resolving issues related to funding ICT. Particularly in a distributed computing environment, ICT planning and life-cycle budgeting can help campus and departmental administrators, faculty, and ICT professionals make critical decisions regarding allocating increasingly limited institutional funds. An interesting article on this can be found at:
http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/text/CEM9424.txt

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and ICT fees -"Facts and Figures:"

Statistics show that there has been a general increase in the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in universities. However, the greater bulk of its use appears to be centered around sending and receiving email (a typical indicator of the innate desire human beings have to communicate). The 12th National Survey on Computing and Information technology in US higher education revealed that between 1994 and 2001, the general use of ICT in instruction for email has increased from less than 10% to about

63%. Over the same period , the use of web pages for courses rose from 7% to about 35%, while the use of web simulations increased from about 9% to 18% and the use of ICT in presentations and handouts rose from about 15% to 45%. As for the use of Internet resources, between 1995 and 2000 saw a rise from about 11% to 43%. http://www.campuscomputing.net/archive/Green-CC2001.PDF

The imposition of ICT fees has become common place in North American Universities with the current pressing issue being increases in the present fees rather than their mere imposition. In 1997, the average rate of ICT fees was $5.96 per credit for public universities, almost $2.00 per credit higher that the $4.00 fee proposed for the University and Community College System (UCCSN). However, according to the Campus Computing Project (http://www.campuscomputing.net), in the year 2001, the average ICT fees paid by students in public and Private Universities is $197. (The University of Iowa charges $140). For Public and Private 4 year Colleges the average fee lies at about $245 and $282 respectively. For Community Colleges, average ICT fee comes up to $164. http://www.campuscomputing.net/archive/Green-CC2001.PDF

An issue of increasing importance in institutions of higher learning is access to Dial up facilities. In 16% of Public Universities, there are no ISP services for their students. For those that do provide ISP services, while 60% provide it for free, about 21% provide these services for a fee. In private Universities, these figures are 38, 43 and 31 respectively. The Campus Computing Project (a site that should definitely be looked at) also tracks the implementation of student fees for Information technology. In 1995 48% of public institutions charged technology fees. In 1998, 67% of the institutions responding reported charging students fees for Information technology. This is an increase from the earlier recorded figures of previous years (i.e.1995- 48%, 1996- 52% and 1997-56%). The 1998 survey revealed that more campuses are using student fees to help cover rising ICT costs. As stated by the Director of Campus Computing; Kenneth Green, though the continuous rise in ICT fees shows the increasing financial challenges of an ICT system, yet campus officials must avoid the temptation to use student fees to supplant, rather than supplement the institutional investment in ICT.

It appears that in most universities, the imposition of ICT fees is initiated by departments such as engineering and business at their departmental level. From there the need is eventually recognized by others. Ohio State University is a good example of a university with a comprehensive ICT plan. The Chief Information Officer (CIO) is responsible for University Information technology Policies. Specific policies are developed through a broadly based campus-wide consultative process managed by the Office of the CIO (http://www.cio.ohio-state.edu). Final policies are approved by the Office of Academic Affairs (http://www.oaa.admin.ohio-state.edu/) and the University Coordinating Council. They are then maintained in the Information technology Policy Repository. Their approach to the imposition of ICT fees was indeed very democratic involving a wide spectrum of interests and expertise. A proposal to establish a campus-wide technology fee was submitted by The Learning Technology Fee Subcommittee of The Deans Learning Technology Committee in the university. However, students were not left out of this process. The Student Technology Advisory Committee (STAC) , composed of undergraduate, graduate, and professional student members plus faculty and staff representatives and ex officio members from the Office of the Chief Information Officer, University Technology Services (UTS) and University Network Integrated Telecommunications System (UNITS) played a significant role in this feat. The committee was very thorough and insightful and engaged in intense research on the issue of a campus-wide fee for technology. It provided input to this proposal submitted by the Deans' Learning Technology

Committee (Deans' LTC, http://www.osu.edu/units/stac/proposal.html) through various phases of the proposal's development. It sought out and made known the views of the students as well as carried out surveys to determine the desires of the students on what should be done with these fees. Numerous recommendations were made by the Dean's LTC. Some interesting and obviously pertinent ones include:

- 80% of the fee income collected be allocated to the academic college/program and 20% to the office of the CIO.

- The learning technology fee be increased at least at the same rate as tuition increases.

- Each college and the office of the CIO develop a public plan for the proposed use of the fee.

- Each college and the office of the CIO will provide an annual report to the provost detailing the uses of the fee income for the past year. The report should include survey of student satisfaction and indicate proposed uses of funds in the following year.

- The university conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the technology fee at the end of the first five years of implementation

  more on this can be found at::
  http://www.osu.edu/units/stac/proposal.html#summary

With regards to the use of the fees, a survey was done and the most common recommendations across all colleges followed by college-specific listings:

1. Provide hardware and software for student computer labs, including in some cases specialized software and laptops
2. Hire personnel to support students in labs and faculty in classrooms
3. Upgrade server support in student computer labs
4. Upgrade infrastructure
5. Increase online courses
6. Enhance classrooms with technology
7. Improve remote connectivity
   for more on this check out: http://www.osu.edu/units/stac/colleges.html

At University of Nevada Las Vegas, given the students keen desire for improved and up to date ICT services, one of the proposed uses of the ICT fees was a 3 year computer replacement plan. The university supporting approximately 1,100 computers for student use in 47 facilities would thus be replacing about 400 machines and related peripherals each year. Similar to most other universities, other proposed uses of the fees include; the support area-based technicians to assist faculty and students using discipline-specific hardware and software in college and department facilities, ICT enhancements for both staff and students, building of multimedia labs, a student-based Student Users Services Desk to augment help desk services for faculty and staff is also proposed for the funds and residence hall computing. To see the survey check out

For more about ICT plans and imposition of ICT fees check out the section on Useful comprehensive information on ICT plans and Policies (see Appendix) found on the links page.

One apparent problem in the process of ICT fees development and imposition amongst the universities appears to be an inability to adequately inform the greater majority of the student body. This in most cases seems to be due to the lack of interest by the students themselves.
Some useful hints on how much is charged by various American institutions and what it is used for can be found at
http://www.public.iastate.edu/~cac_info/cac_bmp/comp_fees96.html. Many colleges and universities have found the introduction of student technology fees troublesome. At the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH), however, both the students and the Board of Trustees responded positively to a carefully crafted "textbook approach" to justifying such a fee. Information on this can be found at:
http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/text/CEM944A.txt

Since fall semester 1991, The University or Iowa has had a general student computing fee (SCF) assessed to all students. The institution believes that access to technology is a vital part of all students' education and to ensure that students have access to up-to-date technology the fee was instigated. The collected fees are used for projects that enhance student learning using technology and increase student access to information technology resources. A large portion of the general fee goes to help support the instructional technology centers (http://itsnt7.its.uiowa.edu/cs/itcs/). The ITCs are the delivery mechanism for the majority of instructional computing on campus. All the ITCs are interconnected by a campus network to provide maximum connectivity to common campus resources such as the library system catalog (InfoHawk, http://infohawk.uiowa.edu), the on-line student registration system (ISIS, http://isis.uiowa.edu/), and the foreign language practice drills (Dasher). They are also connected to a worldwide network through the Internet. There are about 27 ITC and seven of these are designed to incorporate adaptive technology such as voice recognition and voice synthesis. More are planned for the future.

Students response:
At University of Nevada Las Vegas, there was a mixed response to the imposition of computer fees. While some considered it appropriate and necessary, some were totally against it while some just felt it was too high. The results of their survey can be found at
http://www.unlv.edu/infotech/stf/surveyresults.html

However literature available shows that the general response of students to the imposition of technology fees has not been as antagonistic as one may have thought. The University of Iowa Student Association believes that excellent computing facilities are an integral part of a world class education today. To this end. they have worked with University Administration on the institution of a mandatory Computer Fee. Because of the need to stay competitive with peer schools and to diversity and increase their available resources, the Student Association agreed that additional revenues were needed to accomplish its goals. Therefore. the Student Association agreed to a computer fee of the following description with these terms.

Computer Fee Description:

- Mandatory for all students taking any course credit, but not payable by post-comprehensive and masters final registrations and those students who may be

receiving course credit, but are not on campus

- Established at a level of $40 per semester for all students except those in the College of Engineering. Engineering students will have a level of $100 per semester. The fee shall be prorated in proportion to registered credits, but that proration will not be at a level of less than 50% of the appropriate fee

- No increases shall be sought in the Fee until two years have elapsed since its institution. When such increases do occur, they shall not exceed the rate of growth of the Higher Education Price Index or a comparable index agreed to by the Student Association at that time.

- There will be an appeals procedure by which students may appeal a computing fee assessment which they believe is unfair, inaccurate, or not consistent with University policy
  check out http://www.its.uiowa.edu/cio/finance/scf/

Campus Computing Project :a project interested in the use of ICT in higher education and whose national studies draw on qualitative and quantitative data to help inform faculty, campus administrators, and others interested in the use of information technology in American colleges and universities
for more on this project check out their Web site at
http://www.campuscomputing.net/

Computer Fees in Universities Appendix

An article on the result of fee imposition on a Dallas Community College in the USA
http://chronicle.com/daily/2002/08/2002082102n.htm

Useful information on ICT plans and Policies.

University of Iowa
http://www.its.uiowa.edu/cio/finance/scf/

University of Nevada
http://cfo.nevada.edu/stf/powerpoint/sld001.htm

The Ohio State Case:
http://www.osu.edu/units/stac/techfee.html

Murdoch University IT services Page
http://www.its.murdoch.edu.au/

Algonquin College Information Technology fees. What it provides?
http://www.algonquincollege.com/its/services/it_fee.html

Memorandum of understanding between the students association of Algonquin College and Algonquin

Iowa State University Procedures Relating to Charging of Computer Fees
http://www.public.iastate.edu/~cac_info/cac_bmp/comp_fees96.html

University of Saskatchewen ICT Plan
http://www.usask.ca/its/strategic_plan/app_1.html

Classroom Computing and UNIX Computer Fees Policy in DePaul University
http://is.depaul.edu/register/policy.html

Several institutions fee structure and use
http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/CSD1480.pdf

In-room connection for students
http://rescomp.stanford.edu/inrooms/inroom-fee.html

campus computing surveys 1995-2001
http://www.campuscomputing.net/

Pace University
http://appserv.pace.edu/emplibrary/itplan.pdf

Indiana University
http://it.iu.edu/

Chronicle of Higher Education

http://chronicle.com/free/2002/04/2002041201t.htm

The impact of budget cuts on ICT fees in some American universities
http://chronicle.com/infotech/

America Distance Education Consortium (ADEC):
USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN COLLEGE INSTRUCTION EXPAND
http://www.adec.edu/user/current/campus_computing.html

Other Campus Policies Related to Use of Information Technology

Planning for IT in Universities
http://www2.ce.ryerson.ca/conference/Ppt/Ryerson%20presentation%202001/
(seek for permission)

Strategic Planning on ICT: List of numerous websites on ICT planning
http://www.educause.edu/asp/doclib/subject_docs.asp?Term_ID=464

University of Wales Swansea
http://www.swan.ac.uk/lis/reports_and_policy/ict_doc/ICTSTRAT2001.rtf

University of Nevada Las Vegas
http://www.unlv.edu/courses/it/plan/plintro.html

Colleges Struggle with ICT Planning
http://www.campuscomputing.net/summaries/1998/

http://www.campuscomputing.net/

http://www.nea.org/he/heupdate/vol5no1.pdf

Ohio State Universities ICT Strategic Plan
http://www.osu.edu/units/uts/strategic_plan/

ICT funding: List of numerous websites on ICT funding
http://www.educause.edu/asp/doclib/subject_docs.asp?Term_ID=132

computer Systems lab policies

http://www.cs.wisc.edu/csl/doc/policy/

Managing IT Resources
http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/powerpoint/EDU0123.pps

Buying Technology in Higher Education
http://www.convergemag.com/Publications/CNVGMay99/FeatureBuyTech/BuyingTechnology.shtm
(seek for permission)

Articles on IT Staff in Universities

Strategies for retaining IT Staff in a Highly Competitive Environment
http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/CMR0121.pdf

Educause

http://www.educause.edu

http://www.educause.edu/page2/cio_printing_fees.html

A summary of an informal survey of information received regarding charging students an Information Technology Fee.
http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/CSD1480.pdf

A comparison of fees charged at some universities
http://factbook.indiana.edu/fbook99/mndcmp99.html

Some issues on ICT fees application in Universities
http://www.educause.edu/pub/edupage/archives/93/edupage-07.13.93.html

CLA Information Technology Fees Committee Annual Report July 1997
http://www.cla.umn.edu/students/infotech-fees/committee/reports/annualreport97.htm

CLA Information Technology Fees Committee Annual Report July 1998
http://www.cla.umn.edu/students/infotech-fees/committee/reports/annualreport98.htm

PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A CAMPUS-WIDE TECHNOLOGY FEE
more information on fees charged in various institutions
http://cio.ohio-state.edu/communications/appendixC.html

Some information of practices of computer use and access in UC Davis
http://scg.ucdavis.edu/labs/index.cfm

University of Alaska Fairbank
http://www.uaf.edu/finsvcs/AcctCodes/AC9Tuition.html

West Pilbara College: statement of fees composition
http://college.karratha.wa.edu.au/enrolfees/default.htm#panel9

EASI (Equal Access to Software and Information)
serves as a resource by providing information and guidance in the area of access-to-information technologies by individuals with disabilities.
http://www.rit.edu/~easi/easi/alleasi.htm