Library, Media, Academic Computing Committee Minutes
October 21, 1997

Present: Raney Ellis, Mark Fiegener, Mike Gardiner, Nick Michal, Marilyn Mitchell, David Sousa, Bob
Steiner

1. Housekeeping. A new member – Nick Michal, representing ASUPS – was introduced to the
committee. Gardiner reported that John Lear had left the LMAC to join the Diversity Committee, as it
matched his interests better. Ellis invited committee members to attend an October 28 meeting at
which the findings and recommendations of a study of the university's network resources would be
presented.

2. Minutes of the October 7 meeting were discussed. Steiner questioned whether the 4th charge to the
LMAC – "develop and implement the plan to act as liaison with library and computing groups" –
actually originated from the Faculty Senate, as stated in the minutes. Gardiner offered to seek
clarification from the Senate. Minutes were conditionally approved subject to Gardiner's findings.

3. Committee began discussion of one of its charges: "Should students, at some future date, be
required to own computers?"

   Ellis summarized the June 1997 report of the CIT to the president, which included the work done by
   the CIT sub-committee on student access. Ellis mentioned that he was working with a well-known
   consultant who counsels liberal arts universities regarding alternative models of providing student
   access to computing. Ellis said that he would forward the consultant's preliminary proposal to the
   LMAC for its review and comments.

   Issues raised during the ensuing discussion:

   a). What is the Need?   Sousa raised concern about the need for a universal student ownership
   policy, and asked about the current level of student ownership. Ellis estimated that 2/3 of
   incoming freshmen bring their own computers, with the proportion likely increasing as students
   progress through the UPS; he also noted that computer labs around campus are still full.   Sousa
   asked about the current rate of remote access to computing resources. Ellis responded that over
   500 of the 1130 residential students are connected via Resnet.

   Michal, when asked to express the "students' view" of the ownership issue, raised two objections:
   (i) students wouldn't like being forced to pay for computers on top of their tuition; (ii) students
   wouldn't like being told which type of computer to purchase. A discussion of standardization
   ensued. Steiner, as a former member of the CIT sub-committee on student access, reviewed
   some of the discussions of that sub-committee regarding the costs and benefits of
   hardware/software standardization. Ellis noted that different universities handle standardization
   issues differently, and that there are multiple models of student access to draw from.

   Mitchell sought clarification about the problem that a student ownership policy would be trying to
   solve. Gardiner suggested that the need for student ownership might vary by department. Ellis
   turned the issue around and asked whether faculty might not change the way they teach if they
   were sure students commanded a high level of computing proficiency. The resulting discussion
   was summarized by Ellis in terms of the following question, "Should computing be a
   necessary/fundamental part of a university education?"

   b). Pilot Project. Steiner recounted one recommendation of the CIT sub-committee on student
   access: the university would purchase or lease a number of laptop computers, selected courses
   would be designed to take advantage of enhanced student access to computing, and students
   enrolling in the selected courses would "borrow" a laptop for the duration of the course. Ellis
   described a similarly structured pilot project (called "U-Wired") recently conducted at the
   University of Washington. Ellis noted that other models for pilots exist.

c). Cost of Student Ownership. Ellis estimated that the amortized cost to students of leasing a computer would be roughly the same as their per-semester textbook expense. Sousa noted that the computing power provided would be overkill for many students, and asked whether the net effect of the student ownership policy would be to shift the burden of computer lab maintenance expenses onto the students. Ellis assured the committee that the need for the computer labs would remain.

Gardiner and Mitchell noted an analogy between computer leasing fees and lab fees in science courses: learning materials reside with a course, students check out the materials as needed, and lab fees cover the replenishment of materials, breakage, etc.

d). Access to Library Resources. Gardiner broadened the discussion to include access to library resources. Mitchell outlined some of the access issues that will need to be addressed in the future.

4. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 4, at 4:00 in Library 134.

5. Meeting was adjourned at 5:10.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Fiegener