Student Access to Technology Fee

Funding Enhancements to Student-Focused Information Technology at UWF

A Proposal from the Information Technology Committee to the University Planning Council

15-May-2003
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TO: University Planning Council

FROM: UPC Information Technology Committee

RE: Proposal for a Student Access to Technology Fee

It is inarguable that information technology is a major transforming force at the University in this first decade of the twenty-first century. Information technology is a “critical multiplier” for improving scholarship and research, teaching and learning, and administrative effectiveness and efficiency. At the top of the University’s priorities for information technology is enhancing the academic experience of students at the University of West Florida.

Deferred needs for technology infrastructure, unfunded mandates such as the State’s requirement that we implement new financial and human resources systems, and other pressures and fiscal constraints make it difficult to focus funding on information technology enhancements aimed directly at serving students. The Committee has spent much of this year examining the idea of a student technology fee – a common strategy adopted in American higher education today – for generating new funding to serve this vital need.

Throughout the Spring Term we have vigorously debated this proposal in committee; held briefings and consultations with student, faculty and staff councils and committees on this issue; published a web site (uwf.edu/techfee) regarding this proposal; solicited feedback from the entire student body (via StudentNews); and worked closely with the Student Government Association leadership. The result is the attached proposal, which comes forward as a motion from the Committee to the University Planning Council.

We understand that UWF’s ability to institute the proposed fee may be presently limited by actions of the Florida Legislature. In spite of that obstacle, we bring forth this proposal to identify the issue and the need for new funding for student-focused information technology; to identify the broad support of UWF students for this issue; and to propose a philosophy and administrative framework for administering such funding. Should a funding stream be identified other than the specific mechanism of a student fee (e.g., as part of a general tuition increase), we propose that the philosophy and methodology in this proposal is still a sound mechanism for managing that resource.

Today, the Committee also brings to the Council a recommended Strategic Plan for Information Technology at UWF. The first goal of that plan is to “use information technology to enrich the educational experience of students, by enhancing the quality of learning, access to learning, student services, and student engagement in the University community.” Addressing that goal will be impossible without new sources of funding for student-focused information technology enhancements. This proposal, if it can be implemented, provides one solution to that problem.
Proposal for a *Student Access to Technology Fee*

by the University Planning Council Information Technology Committee

Preamble

The mission of the University of West Florida, as stated in its strategic plan, is to "empower each individual we serve with knowledge and opportunity to contribute responsibly and creatively to a complex world." In order for UWF students to be exposed to a quality education, they need access to the appropriate information technology that plays an increasingly vital role in the professional and personal lives of all citizens. Graduates of the University of West Florida must be prepared for the future and to meet the demands of employers for technologically literate employees. Therefore, a quality education at UWF must include the opportunity to utilize information and learning technology to its fullest, in order to be prepared for a technologically driven future. Without this, the professional and personal success of our graduates will be severely compromised.

In the UWF strategic plan, the university has committed itself to aggressively use information technology to support its educational, research, and service missions. At minimum, it is imperative that UWF students be: taught by faculty who fully utilize state-of-the-art information technology in the classroom on a daily basis; given assignments that require them to access information archived in remote locations; and required to become literate in the use of computer hardware and software relevant to their major programs of study. However, the availability of ongoing resources to meet student needs for access to information technology is insufficient to maintain progress toward the university’s ambitious goals without sharing that responsibility with students. Additional resources are needed to complement existing budgets, in order to provide UWF students with a quality educational experience and research training. Although there is great reluctance to increase students’ financial burden for their education, given the university's already low tuition, the reality is that tuition alone cannot adequately address this need. The result is that students are shortchanged.

Therefore, the University of West Florida seeks to establish a *Student Access to Technology Fee*. The purpose of this fee is to supplement state resources and general tuition income with funds directed specifically at the purpose of enhancing the information technology resources and services that are directly used by UWF students in their educational and research activities. The goal of this fee is to enhance, not replace, existing university investments in information technology access for students.

Mission and Purpose of the Student Access to Technology Fee

The purpose of the University of West Florida's Student Access to Technology Fee (SATF) is to enhance student access to information technologies that provide students with the capability to access and manipulate information for learning, in accord with the University's educational mission. The mission of the SATF is therefore to ensure that all UWF students have access to the best possible computing systems, network connectivity, and digital media resources. Furthermore, the purpose of the fee is to enhance resources in existence prior to the creation of the fee, providing partial funding for the University's information technology infrastructure, and the maintenance and constant improvement of that infrastructure through timely upgrades of its hardware and software components.
Priorities for the Student Access to Technology Fee

All uses of SATF funds should provide added value to the educational experience of UWF students, where this value is primarily instructionally oriented rather than oriented toward purely administrative services – important as these services are to a student’s successful university experience. In allocating the SATF funds to specific projects, consideration will be given to all student populations.

The following University units are eligible to make requests for use of SATF funds to advance goals consistent with the priorities for the fund:

- The University CIO, for infrastructure needs and services directly related to enhancing student access to information technology for support of instruction and learning.
- The Center for University Teaching and Learning, and the Library, for projects and services related to enhancing access to digital media and instructional materials.
- The colleges and their academic departments, for projects related to enhancing the education of students via information technology.

Other units may submit requests for use of SATF funds, provided they can document how the intended use directly relates to student instruction and learning activities.

Goals and Imperatives for Administering the Student Access to Technology Fee

The following goals and imperatives should govern the administration of the Student Access to Technology Fee:

1. All uses of the fee will be directed toward the goal of improving UWF students’ access to information technology in support of their instruction and learning activities at the University.
2. All uses of the fee will be in direct support of the University’s strategic plan and its strategic plan for information technology.
3. The fee will supplement, and not replace, existing resources committed prior to creation of the fee.
4. The highest feasible level of student involvement will be sought in administering the fee and funds.
5. The University will proactively publish information regarding funding from the fee and all uses of that funding.

Framework for Initial Implementation of the Student Access to Technology Fee

The SATF should be established and implemented as soon as legislatively and administratively feasible, preferably with the start of the 2003-2004 academic year.

Fee Level and Assessment

The SATF should be initially set at an amount determined by a SATF Administration Subcommittee as a per student credit hour fee, assessed each term, with a maximum assessment per student of 15 credit hours in a given term. The fee is not intended to be a “use fee,” and therefore should be assessed to all UWF students, regardless of their individual use of University information technology resources.
Fee Oversight and Administration

As the purpose of the SATF is to advance student access to information technology in accord with the University’s strategic plan and its strategic plan for information technology, overall administration of the SATF should be a function of the University Planning Council Information Technology Committee (UPC-IT). To fulfill this purpose, the UPC-IT Committee will create a SATF Administration Subcommittee consisting of selected UPC-IT members as well as other invited representatives.

The SATF Administration Subcommittee’s charge is to:

1. Annually review the level and administration of the fee, and recommend changes if needed.
2. Determine a proposal process and guidelines for allocating funds from the fee, and annually determine the allocation of funds from the fee to specific projects and services, issuing recommendations to the UPC-IT Committee for final approval.
3. Annually publish the proposal and allocation process to the campus and proactively solicit proposals.
4. Monitor expenditures from fee funds, to ensure they are in accord with the goals and purposes of the fee.
5. Annually publish a financial report of fee allocations, and projects and services funded from the fee.
6. Produce, and monitor compliance with, standards for prominently identifying equipment, media, and services provided by the fee.
7. Maintain a comprehensive web site regarding the fee and its uses. (The Office of the CIO will provide resources for producing and maintaining this web site.)

Recommended guidelines for membership of the SATF Administration Subcommittee are:

1. It will be chaired by the chair of the UPC-IT Committee as an ex officio non-voting member.
2. The five faculty representatives on UPC-IT (two for CAS, one for COB, one for COPS, one for Library) will be voting members.
3. The Student Affairs Division representative on UPC-IT will be a voting member.
4. The UPC-IT student representative will be a voting member.
5. Five other student representatives, appointed by the Student Government Association, will be voting members. These students will be selected to have one student representative from each college, one representative for graduate students, and one representative for students at the Fort Walton Beach campus.
6. The Director of the Fort Walton Beach Campus will be an ex officio, non-voting member.

The SATF Administration Subcommittee will make its funding recommendations to the UPC-IT Committee for final approval.

Funds from the SATF will be placed into a special account. The University Chief Information Officer will have final signature authority, delegated from the UPC-IT Committee, for authorizing expenditures and transfers from the account in accord with the allocations approved by the Committee. The SATF Administration Subcommittee will monitor all expenditures from the account to ensure they are in accord with the allocations determined by the Committee.
**Allocation of Funds to Specific Uses**

The SATF funds are targeted at the priority uses, and related University units, identified previously. It is envisioned that the UPC-IT Committee will annually establish overall guidelines for distribution of the funds among these uses.

Specific allocations will be authorized on an annual basis. Funding allocations can fall into two categories of spending:

1. **Ongoing technology commitments**, representing multi-year allocations to specific purposes. Examples of ongoing commitments might be providing a multi-year site license for student software, or providing ongoing annual technology refresh funding for a student computer lab.

2. **Yearly project proposals**, which are allocations to specific projects having a definite ending point. Examples of yearly project proposals might be developing the initial version of online materials for a specific course, or a one-time purchase of specialized equipment for a computer lab.

It is anticipated that the funding allocations provided to the CIO for infrastructure and services will be primarily ongoing commitments; funding allocations to the Library and CUTL will be mixed; and funding allocations to colleges will be primarily yearly project proposals. However, even ongoing commitments may be annually reviewed by the Committee.

Unexpended SATF funds will be carried forward for use in subsequent years. It shall also be possible to accumulate SATF funds in reserve over multiple years in order to fund large purchases of information technology equipment.

No part of SATF funds shall be used for expenses related to the administration of the fee. Provision of support services for administering the fee shall be the responsibility of the Office of the CIO.

The UPC-IT Committee’s intent is that the Student Access to Technology Fee not replace any existing or future allocations of University resources for information technology services, but be used to enhance student access to information technology services.

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