

SPECIAL REPORT  
of the  
UNIVERSITY COMPUTER AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE  
CONCERNING THE BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION'S (BHE)  
SUPPORT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The rapid growth of information technology (IT) and pressures for its use in education demand a substantial investment by the University.

IT use on campus varies depending upon equipment available in existing classrooms, Internet connectivity of our community, training of our faculty and students, and equipment available on faculty and student desktops. Heroic efforts are sometimes needed to assemble equipment in our less well equipped classrooms. The slow increase in the number of well equipped classrooms and the technical support needed to operate them is a bottleneck to the general faculty's progress in developing pedagogy.

The Committee recognizes that revenue issues may dictate the rate at which IT can be developed. The committee applauds the BHE's effort to promote an IT program on our campus, and urges the UMass-Amherst IT Task Force to continue its efforts with all deliberate speed. We believe, however, that the current focus on existing IT programs does not address the broader objectives that the BHE wishes to address in encouraging IT education. The Committee urges that the current emphasis on maintaining support for focused IT programs on our campus be broadened to include an emphasis on increasing the number of IT-ready classrooms and providing a revenue stream that will provide appropriate computer equipment and training for all faculty and students.

We emphasize that the appropriate hardware needed by each faculty member and the students they serve may not be consistent with a common solution for the entire campus. A flexible approach to providing the technology to different disciplines must be combined with an understanding that all disciplines must be served by any mandate to increase IT. Some teaching pedagogy requires substantial investments in university owned and maintained equipment such as digital projectors and information servers, and in faculty training. Some disciplines may need substantial help to transcribe their special information (e.g. slides) into IT compatible form. Improvements in equipment may put economic pressures on some segments of our student body and may require special mechanisms to maintain equity.

Therefore, the Committee recommends that the Faculty Senate adopt the following resolution passed unanimously by the Committee on April 10, 2001:

**WHEREAS**

**The need for information technology (IT) infrastructure has become fundamental to the advancement of the academic enterprise and the current structure has resulted in:**

**(1) inequities, including that not all faculty have access to**

- a) IT equipment and software,**
- b) training in use of it,**
- c) classrooms equipped and technically supported for IT; and**

**(2) inequities to students across the University, including unequal**

- a) IT resources based on discipline,**
- b) access to IT based on housing,**
- c) access to IT based on financial need, and**
- d) access to training in use of IT resources;**

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT**

**The students and faculty of every discipline of the University community should benefit from future improvements in IT infrastructure aimed to serve the needs of the entire University community**

**- AND -**

**that the Faculty Senate urge the Board of Higher Education to focus its efforts on increasing the number of IT-ready classrooms and providing a revenue stream that will provide appropriate computer equipment and training for all faculty and students; and to recognize that the appropriate hardware needed by each faculty member and the students they serve may not be consistent with a common solution for the entire campus.**

**MOTION** That the Faculty Senate endorse the resolution passed by the University Computer and Electronic Communications Committee that would provide all disciplines of the University community with improvements in information technology.