

AMENDED

Brooklyn College Software Procurement, Distribution Policy and Process For Requesting Software

The faculty of Brooklyn College require broad availability of current computer software to enhance instruction and productivity. Developing a fair, transparent, and efficient software procurement and distribution policy should therefore be a high priority of the College at least equal to provision of the latest computer hardware. This policy presents a twofold focus:

1. To ensure that software is kept current in both large computer facilities and small research labs.
2. To make it easy to share resources and spending (e.g. grants, STF and ITS budgets,) among the different departments and facilities on campus.

As budgetary resources allow, the College will purchase and make available licenses for standard software packages as needed. Standard software tools will be included with new computers.

There are three kinds of public instructional computing facilities on campus:

- Public facilities, available to all students and faculty, providing access to software, both general and specialized. Campus ITS or AIT staff manages these.
- Departmental facilities with specialized software used primarily by one department or shared among several departments. These are managed by departmental staff and supplemented by campus ITS staff.
- Highly specialized facilities with software specific to a department or an area of study within a department. Individual departments typically manage these facilities themselves.

All these facilities serve different communities of students. All are important and will be considered equally for new software and upgrades. Software purchases will be made with an eye towards maintaining compatible, consistent versions among the entire student/computing resource network.

Software Standards:

The needs and practices of academic departments drive the acquisition of software. The existing (2004-2005) software suite in the various participating departments is recognized as the current toolbox for those departments. Approved software tools used by academic departments will be the accepted toolbox for those disciplines until modified by faculty consensus or decreed unusable.

Procedures for Proposing New Software Tools and Retiring Unused Tools:

Requests for new software must adhere to the following guidelines:

1. The faculty member intending to make the request should acquire a copy of the software (through research grant, or departmental funding).
2. The faculty member should test it with ITS staff to ensure software compatibility and College's computing environment.
3. Only then should the faculty member complete the "Software Request Form" and submit to ITS. The committee should consider a request for general distribution of software only if the product has been certified as compatible with the College's computing environment.

On receiving the form, ITS will immediately convene the members of the divisional committee and the members from AIT. This committee will consider the educational ramifications and priorities of each request relative to the needs and priorities of all participating departments. The committee will discuss how these requests may be funded and implemented within available funding and staff resources.

The Provost in consultation with the departmental chairs will appoint the divisional committees.

The software committee may also decide that a particular software tool should be retired. The initiative for retiring a particular software tool may originate from any constituency on campus, i.e., faculty, students, ITS lab managers etc. The committee would investigate whether any member of the teaching and research faculty is using the tool. It will also have the power to inform members of the faculty that they need to use another piece of software if the majority of the faculty has deemed it no longer useful or if it is determined that it is not cost effective to continue maintaining a particular tool. Obsolete software will be removed from the list of approved software and will not be supported, updated or upgraded.

Software Maintenance:

Public computing facilities, including department labs, will coordinate software implementations to provide a common software environment for students across all available facilities. Software upgrades will be scheduled for installation during the summer or winter break. Lab staff will endeavor to install software updates (incremental releases that resolve software bugs) continuously as the manufacturer reports them and as is feasible within the operating environment of each facility. As new computer equipment is installed in public computing facilities, its software profile will be synchronized with the existing equipment in the facility.

Documentation:

Information Technology Services (ITS) and Academic Information Technologies (AIT) shall publicize current lists of "available software," which the College and/or University already owns and possess available site licenses for installation in faculty and instructional lab computers, with a description of the software's functions. This list of all public computing facilities and the software available at each facility will be presented on the College's web-site and on the TLTR website <http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/pubs/roundt/> as a resource for instructors and students, and to facilitate the coordination and budgeting of software purchases. ITS/AIT shall periodically remind faculty of these resources via proactive means such as newsletters or emails.

Support:

Once the decision to implement a specific specialized software tool has been made by the appropriate committee, the committee will, as relevant, consider the necessity of training for trainers to support widespread use of a particular process of software. It is understood that staff in larger public computing facilities are usually not capable of assisting students in the specifics of how special purpose tools are utilized. Departments that require the use of specialized-software tools should provide additional sophisticated support and training for students. A public or shared departmental lab staff member should be able to show a student how to access a specialized tool, but detailed questions about how the tool is used to accomplish a specific programmatic goal or task should be referred to the faculty or staff in the sponsoring department(s).

ITS will create more direct means for coordinators of shared and departmental labs to access needed staff resources and establish Help Desk policies that give priority to the needs of departmental support staff.

ITS must be informed about all software purchases so that the Help Desk can direct questions to the faculty member who is responsible for the testing software, and ITS can pursue testing software compatibility. Software bought through research funds directly by faculty, installed by them, and used by them and their students, not following the above guidelines are not entitled to ITS support. Members of the faculty are expected to report to the appropriate committee and ITS any grant proposal that involves the buying and installation of new software.

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