

To: Gustavus Faculty
From: Dwight Stoll, Academic Technology Committee Chair
CC: Mark Braun, Bruce Aarsvold, ATC
Date: December 14th, 2012

Re: Summary Evaluation of 2011-2012 Academic Technology Evaluation

Overview

As stated in the faculty handbook, one of the functions of ATC is "to...evaluate implementation of academic technology budgeting priorities funded through the College's budget allocations to GTS." To this end, the committee conducted an evaluation of the Academic Technology Allocation Process during the 2011-2012 academic year. Our methods and findings are described below.

As is previous allocation cycles, GTS has considered and fulfilled most of the academic technology items requested by faculty. In many cases this has been a highly successful, collaborative process. Nevertheless, we continue to find room for improvement in the process, working with GTS to make the process as smooth and satisfying as possible for each faculty member, within the constraints of the current College budget process.

Method

During the week of October 9th, division representatives sent a memo to department chairs (copied at the end of this document) requesting that they indicate whether they received the equipment that they requested and whether the equipment they received met their needs. They were asked to respond by October 29th, though late responses were accepted and are included in this report. The Academic Technology Committee (ATC) then forwarded to Bruce Aarsvold on November 11th a list of requests for which there was no solution (or an incomplete one) in place, as identified by faculty feedback, at some point during the allocation process. Bruce then met with the allocation evaluation subcommittee chair, Kyle Chambers, on November 16th, and again with Kyle Chambers and Dwight Stoll on December 11th, to discuss these issues and determine what actions could be taken to reduce the number of issues in the future. The ATC subsequently discussed this document during the week of December 10th.

Results & Discussion

As indicated by the Allocation Summary document put together by GTS (see ATC website), 65 of 72 technology requests were fulfilled this year, and ATC received feedback on 71 of the 72 requests made.¹ As can be seen in Table 1, 55 of the 72 requests were identified as having met faculty needs (77%), at the time of the survey.

¹ Since ATC did not receive the final approved allocation list until November 1st, 2012, the survey sent to departments asked for feedback on all 72 requests.

Table 1. Status of Technology Requests at Survey Time

Category	Count
Allocation Met Needs as Delivered	55
Allocation had not completely met needs at Survey Time	16
No Response Received from Faculty	1

ATC discussed with GTS the requests that still had issues at the time the survey was administered. We concluded that the number of requests that fall into this category could be lowered in future years by: 1) following up with individual faculty whose needs apparently have not been met to make sure that the information gathered from department chairs accurately reflects these individual situations; 2) encouraging GTS to improve communication with individuals and departments before placing allocated technology items to make sure the technology provided will meet individual and department needs.

Communication, Allocation Approval Timeline, and Transparency

On a larger scale, the committee also feels that there is an opportunity for improvement in the area of communication about the status of request fulfillment. Despite ATC's attempts starting this past May to advocate for a list of approved allocations (cf. the memo to Provost Braun included in the May 8th, 2012 Faculty Meeting Packet), departments and programs did not find out what requests had been approved until mid-November -- 7 to 8 months later than in previous years. As a consequence many departments had to make difficult decisions about using their budgets to accommodate teaching and scholarship needs with only partial information and faculty members were uncertain what class projects they would be able to include in their fall courses since they didn't know if they would have the appropriate hardware or software among other problems.

At the time of the survey, many respondents indicated that their request had not been approved even though GTS reported to ATC that these requests were approved and filled. When questioned about this discrepancy, GTS indicated that their records showed that the requests had been fulfilled and since GTS hadn't heard from the requester anything to the contrary, they didn't realize there was a problem. However, since an approved allocation list was not circulated publicly before the time of the survey, none of the requesters would have known to contact GTS and follow up on these approved but unfulfilled items. This allocation status uncertainty is due in large part to the ambiguity associated with the College budgeting process, particularly this year when such dramatic departures from past practice were observed, putting GTS in the uncomfortable position of needing to allocate a large portion of the requested technology items before the budget was formally set.

ATC and GTS have discussed these issues at length, and agree on the following plan in attempt to avoid much of this uncertainty and frustration in the coming allocation cycle.

- ATC will collect technology requests from faculty and departments early in 2013, and work with GTS to identify funding priorities, as it did in the 2011-2012 cycle.

- By April 15th of 2013 GTS will provide ATC with a preliminary prioritized allocation list indicating those requests that will be fulfilled first. This document will be distributed to the entire faculty at this time.
- By May of 2013 GTS will post a Google Document that lists the status of each technology request (e.g., installed (Y/N), in progress). This document will be viewable by anyone with a Gustavus username and password, and will be updated throughout the summer as allocated technology items are placed throughout campus.

Conclusion

Like last year, the allocated technology items met faculty needs nearly 80% of the time; therefore, the committee's overall opinion on the process is favorable; however, the committee is still very concerned by the problems the shifted budget timeline has caused our committee, GTS, departments, and programs and urge the Provost's Office to provide the effort and creative leadership needed to develop an effective solution to this problem.

To: Department Chairs and Program Directors

From: **[Divisional Rep Name]**, Academic Technology Committee (ATC)

Subject: Assessment of the 2012 Academic Technology Allocation

As stated in the faculty handbook, one of the functions of ATC is "to...evaluate implementation of academic technology budgeting priorities funded through the College's budget allocations to GTS." To this end, we would like to determine the extent to which individual faculty and department/program needs were met by last year's allocation process.

Attached to this memo is the list of items that your department/program requested last year. Unlike previous years, ATC does not know what allocations were approved and fulfilled by GTS; therefore, we request that you talk with the individuals who requested the equipment and provide a brief statement for each request indicating whether that request was fulfilled and the extent to which the allocation has or has not met their needs. If you would like to meet as a department/program with a representative from the ATC to discuss specific items or concerns, we will happily arrange a meeting.

Please send **[Divisional Rep Name]** (**[Divisional Rep Email]**) your completed list by Monday, October 29th.

We appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Best regards,

[Divisional Rep Name]

Academic Technology Committee, **[Division Name]** Division