The University of North Carolina at Asheville during academic year 1999-2000 assembled an ad hoc task force (Appendix 1) to develop an information technology long-range plan (or strategy). This document is the result of many meetings of that task force and its various sub-committees.

A common theme in these meetings was the dire state of technology at UNCA and the corresponding urgency of action. Most of the details in this plan (particularly with regard to teaching and learning with technology) should not be regarded as luxuries or even as suggestions for improvement. Rather, they should be considered as essential steps towards maintaining UNCA's status as a quality liberal arts institution. The reason is simple. As information technology becomes more and more a part of everyday life, greater technological literacy is demanded daily of our graduates, from securing a job to simple intelligent discussion of current events. We have a responsibility to provide our students with as rich and well maintained a computing environment as possible -- an environment which is already being offered at many other institutions.

The task force decided to base its work on the system-wide UNC Information Technology Strategy completed at UNC General Administration in the fall of 1999 (http://www.ga.unc.edu/its/netstudy/).

The UNCA task force organized its plan around the same information technology areas used in the system-wide study:

- Campus teaching and learning with technology
- Services for students
- Administrative systems
- Distance education

Sub-committees of the task force were formed to develop planning goals and action steps for UNCA in each of the four areas. This report of the committee’s work will have the following format:

1. A statement of the goals and action steps (with associated costs) developed for each of the planning areas.
2. A cross-area prioritization of action steps to be used for near-term funding allocation, specifically in academic year 2000-2001.
3. An identification of planning areas that still need attention from the task force as it continues its work in 2000-2001.
As the GA planning process progressed, it merged Administrative Systems and Services for Students into one planning area. This report will do the same.

1. Planning Areas, Action Steps

1.1 Campus Teaching and Learning with Technology

Goals:

• Create/enhance an appropriate infrastructure – space, equipment, software, staff – for technology-enhanced teaching and learning.
• Support faculty development efforts that empower faculty to incorporate technology tools in their teaching and research.
• Provide for students a living and learning environment that ensures their attainment of “technology literacy” upon graduation from UNCA.

Action Steps:

• Make 75% of classrooms at UNCA “smart.”

A smart classroom consists minimally of a network-connected computer and a projector, and may contain additional audio-visual equipment. Smart classrooms enable faculty to employ Internet access and tools such as PowerPoint and WebCT in their classes.

Cost: $100,000 per year for three years, $50,000 maintenance funding in subsequent years

• Implement a “computer refresh” program for faculty and staff.

A computer refresh program would replace old desktop computers with new ones on a regular basis (3-4 years), so that faculty and staff would be able to run applications necessary for their work.

Cost: $500,000 per year

• Implement a “computer refresh” program in student computer labs.

This program would keep technology in student computing facilities up-to-date, an important goal from both academic and “public relations” perspectives. Ideally, labs should get new equipment every two years.

Cost: $150,000 per year
• **Implement a refresh program for scientific equipment (non-computing) in our science labs.**

   Our science labs need new types of equipment and replacements for aging equipment.

   *Cost: $100,000 per year*

• **Establish a focused training program for faculty, staff, and students in the use of information technology tools.**

   This training effort requires dedicated staffing (a professional trainer skilled with IT tools) and, ideally, a dedicated training facility. The identified funding is for staffing only.

   *Cost: $60,000 year*

### 1.2 Administrative Systems, Services for Students

**Goals:**

- For the university in general, provide stable, quality central information systems which support institutional decision-making, provide academic information services for students and faculty, and provide financial information services for faculty and staff.
- For students specifically, provide greater access to web-enabled information and services through self-service mechanisms, allowing students to interact with personalized, intuitive tools that support and enrich their academic and co-curricular experiences.

**Action Steps:**

• **Adopt, implement and exceed (where feasible) the baseline standards for web-enabled student services developed by the GA Student Services Workgroup and adopted by “the Alliance.”**

   The Alliance is a consortium of 11 UNC system schools that will use the SCT administrative software suite and software from other companies to implement the core student services capabilities identified by the GA Student Services Workgroup.

   Specifically, the following systems have been or will be implemented:
   --Web for Students (in service now)
   --Web for Faculty (in testing now)
   --Web for Alumni
--Campus Pipeline (student web portal and email system)
--Student housing
--Payment gateway (allows student credit card payment of tuition and fees)

Cost: $40,000 per year

Note: software license costs are covered by central Alliance funding from GA. Our costs arise from additional software maintenance fees and training and staff development needs.

- **Add web enhancements to existing administrative software systems to increase their functionality, accessibility and ease of use ... specifically, purchase and install SCT’s Web for Employees application.**

Web for Employees provides intuitive web front ends for SCT’s Financial Records and Human Resources systems.

Cost: $32,000 for license, $5,000 in recurring annual maintenance expense

## 1.3 Distance Learning

**Goals:**

- Assess the need for distance learning at UNCA, in conjunction with the UNC GA effort to define an appropriate role for distance learning system-wide.
- Establish a clear definition of what distance learning “looks like” at UNCA (totally web-based courses? Teleconferencing? Etc.)
- Establish a baseline for technology needed to support distance learning.

If distance learning is to be implemented at UNCA:

- Provide for an infrastructure to support distance learning.
- Design programs appropriate for the technology available to distance learners.
- Design a mechanism to assess the quality of learning taking place in distance learning courses.

**Action Steps:**

- **Convene a special exploratory task force to address the issues raised in the first three goals above.**

Cost: No additional funding is needed for the exploratory task force. However, as the distance learning sub-committee reported, significant costs are involved in the implementation of an effective distance learning effort (faculty stipends for course development, network infrastructure, professional staff support, etc.)
2. Funding prioritization

Three factors shaped the task force discussion on near-term funding prioritization:

2. Central GA funding through the Alliance for the key action steps in the Administrative Systems/Services for Students area.
3. The need to do an exploratory study prior to investing in a distance learning effort.

These three factors resulted in the task force’s decision to recommend 2000-2001 funding only in the Campus Teaching and Learning with Technology area. In this area, the task force recommended funding of the following projects:

1. **Build three smart classrooms: $30,000**  
   *Note, August 2000: two classrooms funded during the summer from computer center operating budget; equipment to be installed during fall 2000 semester*

2. **Upgrade the math computer classroom (RH105): $50,000**  
   *Note, August 2000: funded during the summer with 1999-2000 year-end money; facility to be upgraded during fall 2000 semester*

3. **Upgrade the education computer lab (ZH126): $50,000**  
   *Note, August 2000: no action*

4. **Build the Carmichael language lab/computer lab: $100,000 (renovation budget funding)**  
   *Note, August 2000: funded during the summer with 1999-2000 year-end money; facility to be built during fall 2000 semester*


In addition to continued work on the three (formerly four) planning areas identified above, the task force needs to address the following areas in 2000-2001.

1. Governance
What mechanism will be used to decide which projects will be funded and staffed, and how IT funding will be allocated to insure effective operations? Who will decide when issues arise involving supported hardware (servers, desktop systems) and software (operating systems, web servers and browsers, email systems, user web portals, personal productivity software, etc.). With at least six significant budgetary players -- Academic Affairs (101), Enrollment Services, Special Academic Programs, Ramsey Library, University Computing, and the Center for Teaching and Learning – how can we make sure we’re all pulling in the same direction? Is the task force an adequate vehicle for governance or do we need additional structure?

2. Logistical needs

UNC GA created an additional planning task force, Logistical Needs, for the system-wide IT strategy. GA used this planning area to address the on-going support requirements generated by initiatives in the other planning areas. Logistical Needs areas of concern include network maintenance and enhancement; faculty, staff and student training; increasing software maintenance costs; and collaborative procurement. These issues are relevant for our local planning effort as well.
Appendix 1
Members, UNC Asheville IT task force

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Karen Cole, member, Academic Computing Advisory Committee
Robin Daugherty, Manager, Administrative Computing Services
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