EMU Computer Refresh Program (CRP)
Scope, Purpose, Stats, April 28, 2006 — **DRAFT**

Scope and Purpose of the CRP

1. The Computer Refresh Program (CRP) is designed to make sure that desktop computer systems provided for use by faculty, staff, and students at EMU are replaced on a regular basis. The project objectives are:
    a. Transition campus purchases of computers from ad hoc capital expenses to planned, strategic, operational expenses.
    b. Identify and operationalize purchases of widely-used computer software to provide equal access for all campus constituencies and reduce risk associated with improper implementation of software licenses.
    c. Ensure that members of the EMU faculty and staff community have sufficient computing capability to fully participate in a technology-enabled work and learning environment.
    d. Create a process that is sustainable and repeatable, and that ensures the equitable and efficient distribution of computing resources.
    e. Develop strategic partnerships with vendors that are most likely to remain sustaining leaders in the industry to assure continuity and excellence in technology, service, and value.

2. Additional CRP *tactical* objectives:
    a. Ensure that every FTE-GF[1] employee has a computer no more than three years old[2]
    b. Ensure that *non*-FTE-GF employees—such as part-time faculty, auxiliary employees, GAs, temps and student employees—have reasonably serviceable computers (The plan is that they receive computers that come out of the CRP cycle, thus the "trickle down" process)
    c. Dispose of unsupportable, outdated computers; streamline computing purchases to create a supportable computing infrastructure
    d. Ensure that departmental computers no longer needed for the original department's faculty/staff are reassigned to faculty/staff from other departments *before* being sent to labs, placed in storage or assigned for other uses

3. ***Program is funded entirely by students via the Information Technology Fee***

4. What the CRP does **NOT** do:
    a. Ensure that every EMU employee receives a new computer every three years
    b. Ensure that all open labs receive new computers every few years (as of 2006, there is a discrete line item within the information technology fee to address lab refresh)
    c. Manage or accommodate *all* new computer purchases for EMU faculty and staff
    d. Address most purchases of peripheral and extension devices/options
    e. Provide a dollar amount that departments may use at their own discretion for technology or computer purchases
    f. Require users to give up their old CRP computer before receiving a new one (*This is recommended for change, see Item 5.*)
    g. Assign new CRP computers to individual positions each year (*This is recommended for change, see Item 5.*)

Function, Procedures and Stats of the CRP

1. Program is managed by Ron Woody of ICT
    a. Every year, Ron convenes a CRP group that includes college and divisional technologists, ICT staff, other staff, faculty
    b. The CRP group researches and creates specifications for models and features. A standard Windows desktop model and Macintosh desktop model are specified each year

at no cost to departments. The goal is to keep the costs comparable (usually at or below $1,000 each). Last year, a standard laptop from each platform was also available at no cost to departments. *For additional cost*, departments may select high-performance models of Windows and Mac desktops and laptops, or they can add upgrades and enhanced features for all models.

c. Each year, the CRP group details the minimum PC and Mac standards that can be supported by ICT. Anyone wishing to retain a computer that falls below these minimum standards must either upgrade or find alternate means of technical support for their outdated system. The minimum standards are designed to be accommodating. Generally, the standards include computers six to eight years old or more. Computers that do not meet the minimum standards are not generally acceptable for business or academic purposes. The minimum standards are announced by June of each year, but not implemented until the following January, thus allowing departments time to upgrade or order new computers.

Last year's minimum support standards were: (*Please note these are **not** the **recommended** standards; they are the minimum*)

  i. **Minimum supported PC**: Windows 2000 or XP; 256 MB of RAM; 600 MHz or faster processor; 10 GB hard drive; Microsoft Office XP
  ii. **Minimum supported Macintosh**: OS 10.2; 256 MB RAM; G3 processor w/ built in USB support (i.e. no beige); 6 GB Hard drive; Microsoft Office X

2. Program is 5 years old in 2006 – 4 years of activity; one year hiatus between yrs. 3 and 4

3. Current definition for CRP eligibility: employees who are 100% FTE *and* compensated 100% from the General Fund

4. Departments submit rosters of all employees each year to have eligibility verified.

5. Annual CRP allocation is made by department, for one-third of the total employees each year (i.e. a department with 15 employees receives 5 allocations per year).

   Currently, specific assignments of the CRP computers are at the discretion of the department head; they are *not* tied to individuals, to specific positions within the department, or even to CRP-eligible employees. This aspect of the CRP procedures is **recommended for change**, with **executive-level support**. To protect the program's purpose, steward its resources, and ensure an equitable computing environment, it is recommended that EMU implement a **one-person, one-CRP-computer** policy. As things currently stand, individual staff/faculty are not required to turn over their existing CRP computer in order to receive a new one. This jeopardizes the program's purpose and creates an inequitable environment for other staff/faculty who should be receiving the reassigned computers within each department through "trickle down." The problem was exacerbated in 2005 with the advent of a laptop option as a base computer model. Some staff and faculty decided to keep their CRP desktop, and order a new CRP laptop also. These individuals enjoy access to two updated computer systems, while other staff/faculty must continue to use aging computers because they did not receive new or "trickle down" computers.

   Since EMU **students literally pay for all CRP computers**, it is essential that the University exercise prudent stewardship over these resources, and that the CRP remain a focused, limited program that provides *one* computer to each eligible staff or faculty member. This is the understanding students have about how their funds are used for the CRP. Additional computers may be purchased at any time, outside the CRP, using departmental funds.

   Executive-level support for the **one-person, one-CRP-computer** policy would make the policy viable. The ICT or local tech staff would not have to be the "enforcers," as the policy would apply to all CRP computers. The installation of the new computers and the reassignment within the department or disposition of the old computers could take place in an orderly, equitable way. Individuals who need more than one computer could either use departmental funds to purchase a

non-CRP computer, or sign out a departmental laptop for portability purposes.

Another aspect of the one-person, one-CRP-computer policy that is recommended is to **align eligibility with individual positions**, rather than as a simple percentage allocation within each department. Currently, a department of 15 receives 5 allocations per year, to be assigned entirely at the discretion of the department head. This has led to inequitable distribution of computers, and allows for assignment of new CRP computers to non-eligible personnel. A more equitable and focused approach would be to align the assignments with specific individual positions. This would ensure that the program's goal of refreshing all eligible employees' systems every three years would be realized. It would also engender greater equity in the reassignment of systems for "trickle down."

6. In 2005, CRP used an online order form system for the first time (departments did not actually order online, due to the need for an attached req. But all specifications were detailed and captured via the online form).

7. In 2005, 497 computers were ordered:
    a. 400 Dells: 279 desktops and 121 laptops
    b. 97 Macintoshes: 51 desktops and 46 laptops

8. Standard installed software in 2005 included:
    a. Microsoft Office 2003 (Windows) or Office 2004 (Macintosh)
    b. Internet Explorer and Firefox browsers
    c. Netscape and Thunderbird email clients
    d. All Banner software (including ODBC drivers)
    e. McAfee VirusScan (Windows) or Virex (Macintosh)
    f. Ad-Aware SE (Windows systems only)
    g. Acrobat Reader
    h. Standard Windows or Macintosh utility applications
    i. iLife Suite (Macintosh systems only)
    j. Secure FTP client

9. Standard procedure is that Help Desk personnel or local techs deliver the computers, set them up and reassign ("trickle down") or decommission the old ones – when users consent to the disposition. One level of reassignment within the original department is supported. When computers are to be reassigned or disposed outside the original department:
    a. Inter-departmental disposition: EMU's standard is to wipe the hard drives and re-image them before reassigning computers to other departments on campus
    b. Off-campus disposition: Computers sent to surplus have their hard drives destroyed and the rest of the equipment disposed per contract with a licensed external vendor.

Additional CRP-related issues for consideration:

1. **Technology support.** Decreasing technology staff levels concurrent with growing needs for technology support make it increasingly difficult for EMU's technology staff to provide the level of support that users expect and deserve. Technology standards must be maintained at a supportable level, which includes streamlining processes; acquiring a supportable infrastructure; decommissioning outdated equipment; and ultimately, addressing the chronic staffing shortage.

2. **Data security issues.** The University practice of wiping hard drives before reassignment, and disposing of hard drives before computers are finally decommissioned, will address most concerns about data security within the CRP program process. However, broader issues of how data is stored, accessed, shared, protected and disposed—as well as all devices and media related to these processes—should be comprehensively addressed at the University level.

3. **Components that can be purchased; support compatibility**. One of the tactical goals of the CRP has been to provide current, usable, supportable desktop computing systems. Therefore, the number of extensibility options and features, as well as peripheral devices available through the program, has been intentionally limited. The CRP recommends and supports such items as (this is not an exhaustive list):

   o Pre-installed memory upgrades
   o Specified media drives
   o Specified port replicators
   o Specified peripheral controller cards (i.e. 1394 cards)
   o Specified hubs
   o Specified USB and Bluetooth devices such as flash drives, keyboards and mice

   The CRP does not recommend or support specific printers. Departments wishing to acquire and install printers on the network are advised to contact ICT or their local tech before a purchase decision, to ensure that their preferred printer will function properly on the network. A vendor support contract is also recommended, as ICT staff and local techs will not be able to diagnose or repair departmental printer malfunctions.

   The same principle applies to additional extensibility options and computing devices: Departments are advised to contact ICT or a local tech before a purchase decision, to find out which devices or options can be supported on campus, and which will require departmentally-funded vendor support. Also, it is important for departments and individuals to understand that certain extensibility actions may void a computer's warranty (such as installing non-standard memory cards, etc.). Any repairs or alterations to a computer's architecture should be undertaken by a licensed technician or service provider.

   Questions about the Computer Refresh Program should be addressed to **Ron Woody**, ron.woody@emich.edu or 487.2290.

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[1] The reason that only General Fund employees are eligible for the program is that the CRP's sole funding source is a GF student fee.

[2] The rationale for a three-year cycle is three-fold:
A. New computer warranties are generally three years. Computers off warranty increase the support burden (or the warranty cost, if a choice is made to extend the warranty).
B. A longer cycle would create significant support issues with the reassigned computers.
C. The information technology fee, which funds the CRP, is approved on a three-year cycle. It makes sense to align the program's administration with its funding model.