

Minutes of Student Computer Ownership Committee (SCOC) Meeting on 24-Nov-2003

Attending: Linda Cabot, Eric Carlen, Miles Edson, Luis Martins, Jim McClellan, Scott Riggle, and Jason Wallace

Absent or Excused: Kyle Elliott, Michael Gamble, Dan Morrison, and David Smith

Jim McClellan will continue as SCOC chair for 2003—2004.

Linda Cabot reported that the Technology Fee proposal for a PDF writing license from Adobe was not funded. Jason Wallace mentioned a free printer-driver solution, and volunteered to provide information on this procedure so that it can be published via the SCO web site (<http://www.sco.gatech.edu/>).

A representative of the bookstore/computer store is missing from the committee. E-mails to last year's member, Maxine Wright, bounced, so a new member must be identified. According to the Faculty Senate web site the member is Rob Riding of OIT, so McClellan is trying to contact him. It was also mentioned that Bobby Pearson (4-0881) who manages the bookstore should be able to name a representative—McClellan will contact him.

Eric Carlen brought some information about a Maple-9 student version that is available for \$75, instead of the usual \$139. It appears that the only thing needed to make this lower cost applicable is to have a statement that Maple-9 is adopted and/or recommended for use in either specific courses or courses in general. We could provide this easily via the SCO web site, because we already do recommend Maple. In addition, the Maple software (at this price) would be obtained via an internet download, so the link to that download could be provided on the OIT "software downloads" site. Members of the committee felt that this "deal" should be run by the bookstore to alert them to this better pricing for the students.

The next point of discussion was the contents of the annual letter to the faculty asking for input on the hardware and software specifications made by the SCOC. The letter will include the present hardware & software specs at <http://www.sco.gatech.edu/downloads/sco2003.pdf>. Several members raised the point that we should require a CD writer in the hardware spec, so we will indicate that in the faculty letter. It will be useful for backups, and also for turning in course projects that involve a lot of graphics and supporting material.

A discussion about requiring laptops was taken up. Links to other schools such as Clemson and RPI are: <http://www.rpi.edu/laptops/> (RPI mobile computing requirement) and <http://laptop.clemson.edu/>. After some discussion, it was agreed that we could use the "faculty letter" to obtain some information about the faculty's interest in using laptops in their classes, or the general utility of having all students with a laptop. In addition, we should also ask about other variations, such as the desirability of tablet PCs. These questions will be at the front of the letter. Other sample questions were: "How much added value do you see with laptops?" or "Do you want to use laptops in your class?"

Some points that came up during the discussion: The SCOC website material on laptops (see below) should be updated with a stronger case in favor of laptops, but stop short of requiring them. The GT MBA program requires laptops and they work very successfully in classes where cases studies are being done. More and more students have laptops and will bring questions to office hours by showing their work on a laptop. This is especially true in CS programming classes, Math with MAPLE, and engineering with MATLAB programming. Another future use could be as a replacement for computer labs which are a significant expense to keep current (in both support time and money). If a computer-based lab was a work area with extensive network

coverage and some peripheral resources (e.g., printers), the students could bring their machines to do the work. Entry-level CS courses could exploit this, as well as other courses like ECE-2025 that have a MATLAB programming lab component.

McClellan will draft a letter for SCOC approval, and then send it out via the Secretary of the Faculty.

A concern was raised about various colleges within GT contacting incoming students and giving them different hardware/software specs. This is not necessarily bad, but it can cause confusion on the part of parents and entering freshmen. At a minimum it indicates that certain colleges are not aware of the SCOC activities. It was suggested that the SCOC identify the source of some of these other specs and try to coordinate with them, at least to the extent of having links on the SCOC website to the various colleges and their unique specifications. Also, we might be able to increase our specs slightly to take care of most cases (if we know what the various colleges want). Linda Cabot and Scott Riggle will try to track down some of this information. It may be that FASET can provide information on which colleges are requiring alternate specs.

LAPTOP INFORMATION

Some students may choose to bring laptop computers to campus. We are providing a list of Pros and Cons for you to think about prior to purchasing and bringing portable computers for your academic use.

Pros

- Wireless access availability in library and numerous other campus locations
- Ability to use with team projects
- Ability to take home over breaks/holidays
- Increased mobility

Cons

- Potential for theft
- More expensive than desktop computers
- Some professors may not allow laptops in class
- Laptops are heavy when carried around campus
- Insurance coverage responsibility of parent/student
- More expensive to upgrade