

To: John Mouton, University Senate Chair
From: The Academic Computing Committee
Date: September 23, 2003
Re: Recommendations Regarding Purchasing Agreement

After discussing various issues that have risen from faculty concerns regarding the current purchasing contract with GovConnection for IT related products, the ACC offers the following recommendations to the Senate:

- 1) The ACC strongly recommends that members of the community who will be affected by computer purchasing agreements be consulted throughout future contract bid processes. This includes involvement in the development of the bid specifications as well as involvement in the evaluation of bids in regard to the responsiveness of each respondent. Specifically, the ACC would like to see individuals with technical expertise in terms of the functional needs of various units across the campus (Distributed IT Managers, for example) having a voice in this process.
- 2) The ACC recommends that the procedure for determining the *sufficiency of justification* for purchases that are requested outside of the new purchase agreement be articulated to the faculty. The committee would like to see the process and responsible decision-making individuals on campus identified in order to make the appeal of purchasing decisions a more communicative and streamlined effort. The committee recommends that Purchasing consult the distributed IT managers within each college as a part of this process. The "appeal" process may take the form of the following procedure:
 - a) Faculty member requests purchases of IT materials outside of the contract
 - b) Purchasing *processes the order* due to clear and necessary departure from the contract according the specified needs identified in the purchasing request. (Process Finished)

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 - a) Faculty member requests purchases of IT materials outside of the contract
 - b) Purchasing *rejects purchase* due to insufficient justification for purchase outside the contract
 - c) Purchasing forwards rejected request to Rich Burnett for review.
 - d) OIT representative(s) either approves or *requests clarification of IT needs from the faculty member's identified distributed IT manager*. After this review, OIT makes a final recommendation to Purchasing regarding the justification for purchase outside the contract agreement. *Purchasing processes or rejects the purchasing request based on OIT's recommendation*. (e.g. if OIT recommends processing the request, Purchasing does so; if OIT recommends denying the request, the request is denied) Faculty not having a distributed IT manager in their college should utilize the OIT expertise in this process.
- 3) The ACC recommends that a FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) list be created that communicates both the procedures for ordering IT materials within the GovConnection contract, as well as the criteria for determining whether a particular purchase would fall outside the contract. This FAQ should be made publicly available to members of the Auburn University community. These questions may be drawn from a variety of arenas including, but not limited to: questions from departments, individual faculty, or others making computer purchases that are affected by the "new" purchasing agreement with GovConnection. Questions will provide answers to the most frequently asked questions such as "Can we purchase non-IBM computers if we need them?" "How does our unit handle a teaching classroom that needs replacement computers?" "Who are the people with authority/expertise in making *exception* decisions about computer purchases?"
- 4) The ACC recommends that the potential of entering into "joint purchasing agreements" for any and all enterprise tier computers to be awarded to multiple suppliers to cover all qualifying tier brands be explored for future contracts and bid processes. The identification of joint purchasing partners should begin as soon as feasible to ensure that bid specifications be written to benefit all parties in the agreement.

In addition to the above recommendations, the ACC would like to emphasize that clarifying, streamlining, and facilitating the communication process between the Purchasing office and the faculty is of the utmost

importance. By making a commitment to the resolution of conflicting messages concerning purchasing decisions made in regard to the current contract with GovConnection, the administration will demonstrate its willingness to foster shared governance with the faculty. In order to monitor progress on the purchasing recommendations, the ACC recommends that the implementation of these recommendations be reexamined at the beginning of the Spring (2004) semester, and every 6 months thereafter.

The ACC asks for the support of the Senate in the implementation of these recommendations.