Topics to consider

- Does the Public Computer lab have a future at BSU?
- With upcoming space utilization changes, how can we best organize labs on campus to serve the students? Consolidate? Locations? Hours?
- What obligation does IT have to provide access to software on reliable machines?
- What is the future of BYOD on campus?

Lab facts

- Total computer lab locations: 71
- Public labs on campus (AY 2011): 4
- Public labs on campus (AY 2013): 3
- Public labs on campus (AY 2014): 2
- Projected public labs on campus (AY 2015): 1
- Number of computers in public labs (2014): 121
- Projected number of computers in public labs (2015): 99
- Number of department labs on campus (AY 2004): 31
- Number of department labs on campus (AY 2014): 69
- Number of computers in departmental labs (2004): 117
- Number of computers in departmental labs (2014): 446
- Number of dept. labs with less than 8 computers: 60
- Percentage of on-campus students that logged into a public lab (as of 1/1/14): 70
- Average session time per login: 1hr 45min

How a dept. lab is created. As public labs get refreshed, old machines are pulled and cleaned up and offered for general use on campus. Departments will request a few older machines for a project they are working on. The machines are paid for and not being used—IT/CIO usually agrees and delivers the machines. A lab is born!

In a few years, these machines start to show their age. A request is made to have this new lab refreshed. This gets approved. The lab is now official and part of ITS refresh process.

As a result of this process, usage of public labs decline as users spread out across campus. Resource management and software licensing become more difficult. Labs bloom in multiple locations. Ownership rules start to proliferate as departments set terms for access to their labs. Costs increase with additional administration.

There is no process for establishing a need for a lab. How do we evaluate it? How might it affect the use of public labs? How can we realign the labs so we are certain they are meeting the needs of the students? We encourage expansion; never contraction.

As we continue to have conversation about space usage on campus, we are in the perfect position to look at labs and make recommendations on efficient and manageable lab locations. This is going to happen; let’s steer it intelligently.

Recommendations. Regain focus on at least one, centrally-located, student assisted, full-software, multi-platform public computer lab. Consolidate smaller dept. labs into larger public computer-classrooms based on needs, reasons and location. Join ongoing conversations with planning committees to recommend lab placement. Develop a lab planning group that looks to proactively manage labs based on merits, and recommend changes as needed.

Public labs. These are computer areas that have complete software libraries installed on all machines (goal). They offer both Mac and Windows platforms, as well as printing options. These spaces are not available for reservation and are staffed by ITS student workers to answer questions or provide assistance to students. They often have longer business hours than other spaces on campus. Currently there are 2 such locations, D11 and Library (various floors). ITS manages these spaces from student tech fee money.

Dept labs. Like public labs, these are areas were computers are available, but tend to have rules restricting their use to certain majors and/or times. Like Public labs, the hardware and software, purchase, and management of these resources come from ITS budgets via student tech fees. Software is often specific to the needs of the department. Public access to these labs is often limited to allow professors unscheduled access to these spaces for impromptu demonstrations. The spaces are sometimes restricted to all students (even during open building hours).

Computer classroom. These are rooms like BN218 or L122. They are available to professors to book and teach classes that require students have a machine in front of them to participate. Traditionally these are associated with a department, and software installed on these machines favors the department’s needs. They are often not available for general student use (HS109, HS104). ITS manages these labs (hardware refresh and software) from student tech fee money.