

To: Learning and Collaboration Spaces Working Group

From: Educational Technology Leadership Group, Liz Gibson, Chair

Via: George Michaels, Working Group Liaison to ETLG)

RE: Request for Information Regarding Use of Computer Labs and Virtual Computer Labs

The ETLG has a commitment to report to the IT Leadership Council on the trends that we are seeing in computer lab use as one aspect of learning and collaboration spaces. Do you see a trend in declining use of computer labs across the UC system? Do you see identifiable trends in changes in the kinds of use of computer labs? Are there individual campus trends that differ from the others? We are looking for benchmarking and commentary. No need for a detailed, long report.

The ETLG also has a commitment to report to the IT Leadership Council on Virtual Computer Labs, and the potential benefits and drawbacks from implementing a virtual computer labs. By virtual computer labs, we mean online access to software and services centrally hosted along the lines of the description below of the VLC at CSU East Bay:

The Virtual Computing Lab (VCL) allows students to access the software applications their coursework demands from campus, home, or any place where they have a browser and Internet. They have this access seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Complex, expensive software can run on the VCL and be accessed via an older PC or a Macintosh because the hardware in the VCL handles the processing. Faculty use this same infrastructure for high-performance computing for activities and research. This project involved creating a shared VCL cloud (interconnected by CENIC's CalREN network) for students and faculties at multiple CSU institutions.

We would appreciate your considered opinion on the advisability of exploring the deployment of virtual computer labs as either individual campus initiatives, multicampus shared initiatives, or a systemwide initiative. Would we recommend it? If so, why, or why not?

If your campus does not have centrally managed computer labs, would you be able to comment from your own familiarity with the operation of computer labs on your campus, or pass this request on to the folks on your campus who would have access to the appropriate information?

Key Questions:

- Is there a trend indicating declining use of general purpose computer labs?
- Is there a trend in the increased use of special-purpose computer labs?
- Are there other definable trends in changing use of computer labs?
- Are you deploying or piloting virtual computer labs currently?
- Do you have any plans to pilot virtual computer labs in the near future?
- Do you see specific benefits in virtual computer labs?
- Do you see specific drawbacks in virtual computer labs?
- Do you see any specific benefits or drawbacks to the possibility of multi-campus or systemwide hosted virtual computer labs?

As an aid to making responding easier, we have created a short survey form that covers these questions on Google Docs. The url for the form is:

<http://spreadsheets1.google.com/viewform?formkey=dHJmT0JhdIRrUHdpSIdjcmJlZjhXMXc6MQ>

The Chair of the Learning Spaces WorkGroup, John. O. Davis will be invited to join the next ETLG meeting on Monday, February 7th, 2011, for one hour between 1 and 4pm. J.O. can work with me and Liz to determine the best time for him to make a presentation to the ETLG. Please Provide the ETLG with a copy of your brief report (summary only – not to exceed 2 pages) by 11:00 AM on February 7th, 2011.