

Client Operating System University Computer Labs

The ACPAC action team, Client Operating System Team, was asked to evaluate and recommend the client operating system to be used in the University computer labs during the 2001 – 2002 academic year. The group reviewed the following client operating systems:

Windows 98

Windows 98 is current operating system being used in the University computer labs and most college and department PC computer labs across campus. This operating system has proven to be a stable operating system. Windows 98 is currently part of the University's Microsoft Campus Agreement, which allows the use of the operating system on all University owned equipment at no additional charge.

New PC's that are purchased have the option of shipping with the Windows 98 operating system from the University's two primary PC vendors (Dell and Gateway)

Windows ME (Millennium Edition)

Windows ME is the next version (upgrade) of the Windows 98 operating system and is geared toward the home user market. Windows ME provides little additional functionality from the current Windows 98 operating system.

Since Microsoft is focusing on the home user market with Windows ME, it is not one of the products included in the Microsoft Campus Agreement. If the University chooses to upgrade current PC's running one of the Windows 9x operating systems to Windows ME, it would require the purchase of an individual license for each machine it would be loaded. This would be a big expense to the University.

In the limited testing that has been done, we have also found that the McAfee anti virus software which the university has a license agreement to provide virus protection does not currently run on Windows ME.

Windows ME also has the highest hardware requirements of the 3 client operating systems being considered.

New PC's that are purchased have the option of shipping with the Windows ME operating system from the University's two primary PC vendors (Dell and Gateway).

Windows 2000 Professional

Windows 2000 Professional is Microsoft's newest operating system focused toward university and business environments. It is an upgrade to the Windows NT workstation client operating system and begins the bringing together of the Windows 9x and Windows NT workstation operating systems into one operating system.

Windows 2000 Professional incorporates substantial changes in the management, security, and usability

of the client operating system. It is not a minor upgrade to Windows 98 similar to the move from Windows 95 to Windows 98. Substantial testing and planning is required to ensure a clean move to Windows 2000 Professional.

Windows 2000 Professional is included in the Microsoft Campus Agreement the University has which allows it to be loaded on University owned equipment at no additional charge.

The hardware requirements for Windows 2000 Professional are greater when compared to Windows 98 but slightly less than Windows ME.

New PC's that are purchased have the option of shipping with the Windows 2000 Professional operating system from the University's two primary PC vendors (Dell and Gateway)

Recommendation:

The action team recommends staying with the Windows 98 operating system for the 2001 – 2002 academic year.

Faculty teaching the introductory computer courses focus primarily on MS Office 2000 and Internet browsers (Internet Explorer and Netscape) as well as basic client operating system functionality. Additional application software is taught that focus on the needs of a specific course or courses. These applications will run the same no matter which client operating system is used.

Some of the specialized course specific software has not been tested on the alternative operating systems. The biggest concern is with a move to Windows 2000 as this is considered the next logical client operating system upgrade. We are aware of several of these applications that are older and most likely not compatible with Windows 2000. The departments and colleges need the opportunity to identify funding sources to purchase the required upgrades.

To allow for seamless use of computer labs across campus, the move to Windows 2000 Professional or Windows ME in the University computer labs would push the other labs across campus to make a similar move. Some of these facilities would be unable to make such a move do to hardware that does not meet the minimum hardware requirements to run these operating systems at an acceptable performance level.

These things considered, there are no pressing operational or technical reasons to make a move at this time.

Preparations for a move to the Windows 2000 Professional operating system should begin summer 2001. Testing and implementation procedures should be conducted by the College Technology Managers for use in the University computer labs. If new client operating system(s) are introduced by the during the 2001 calendar year they should be included in this process.

Over the next year, all labs should be reviewed to ensure that the hardware will be in place to run the newer client operating systems that are available. Labs that do not have the hardware required to run the Windows 2000 Professional operating system should develop a plan to ensure minimum hardware requirements are in place by the summer of 2002. It is generally recommended that a Pentium II processor with 128MB of memory PC be used to provide acceptable performance.

