GreenSafe Q&A

In the Spring, 2008, Information Technology began developing a centralized campus program to:

- Provide data cleaning services for obsolete computing assets
- Meet EPA guidelines regarding the disposal of computing assets (e-waste)
- Maintain central records of disposal, and
- Provide services that are self-supporting

Information Technology has agreed to extend the introductory period for free submission of assets to the GreenSafe program, regardless of the age of the asset, to the end of the current fiscal year (June 30, 2009). Disposal incurs some real costs and IT will cover these costs for this period while we continue to look for lower cost disposal options. IT recommends that departments plan on a 4-year replacement cycle for desktop PCs and a 3-year replacement cycle for laptops. Research shows an increase in total cost of ownership and employee productivity for systems retained beyond this. We do recognize that a 5 year cycle may be acceptable for limited use tasks, however, equipment 5 years and older has no residual value to cover disposal costs.

Program Structure & Organization

Why does this program have associated fees for older assets?

Proper disposal of used assets is no longer a casual activity and has real implications and literal costs to the university. Proper disposal – including data security and environmentally responsible recycling – are not free to the university nor are they covered by other service fees. However, in an effort to make this as low impact on the departments as possible, the GreenSafe model allows all assets that have value to be recycled for *free* to the department (even though recycling these assets still have real costs to the university, IT will fund these costs and attempt to make up this cost up in resale value). Assets that have no value do not fit this model and actual recycling costs must be paid by the departmental owners of the assets in order to meet the university obligation for the program to break even.

There are a number of vendor partners required to accomplish the GreenSafe program. Each of the vendors involved are being coordinated under Dell Asset Recovery Services (ARS) to provide secure DOD-level data wipes, asset inventory, labeling, packing and shipping, resale and/or environmentally sensitive disposal (including disposition of EPA-regulated hazardous material). These services have real costs regardless of whether or not the asset has value. Value assessment is actually a separate, secondary process performed by Dell ARS. They do not "charge" the University for a lack of value, only for the services

they are providing as described above. The recovery charge is only applied to departments for assets that incurred real service charges from Dell ARS but did not return any value.

Why would a department want to buy or lease new machines when older ones still function?

The best practice for end-user computer lifecycle is a 3-5 year replacement cycle. Growth in CPU power requirements, memory usage and other factors by standard software suites, as well as increasing demands of network-based services and applications, indicate that users without access to stable and adequate computing power are not functioning as efficiently and effectively as possible. Many university departments follow this guideline and experience the productivity gains expected from appropriate computing assets in a modern workplace.

Why can't we just put our old assets in the trash?

Trash disposal of computers is not, and has never been, an option for HSC organizations as it is a violation of both existing HSC campus policy as well as EPA guidelines. Please see the following for University requirements for disposal of computer assets:

- http://it.ouhsc.edu/policies/DataDisposal.asp
- http://w3.ouhsc.edu/ehso/

Why can't we just remove the hard drives?

While removing the hard drive does temporarily protect the data for that particular device, it does not address then what to do with that hard drive which contains both data and EPA-regulated products that must be destroyed safely. External to a computer, the hard drive is no longer functional and cannot be "wiped" but must be shredded for disposal. Both of these activities incur real, identifiable costs that are the obligation of the university.

Program Operations

Can I re-use parts from my old computers?

In an effort to make the GreenSafe program free for the university departments, a business model was developed that allows the costs associated with the collection, data cleaning, packaging & shipping to be mostly offset by the remaining value left in the assets themselves. Unfortunately, the components usually removed from a computer for parts are the very items that give the asset any value. The charge associated with computers that are missing their value components is simply the cost recovery of the data cleaning, packing & shipping expenses. If parts are an important resources for your department, IT would recommend that you "keep back" a few computers for spare parts within the department while recycling the majority.

What are the cost details for submitting older computers to the GreenSafe program?

A department will only be charged the cost-recovery asset fee for aged assets if (a) they purchase, not lease, their computers, and (b) they replace computers on a 6+ year cycle. The necessity of the recovery fee for component-less computers is address in #1, above. I would add that the $70 charge is assuming that you are submitting a complete system (computer, monitor, peripherals) that is greater than 5 years old. Actual costs could be significantly less for single items (we are looking into how to manage the accounting for this approach). I'm sorry I did not make that clear in my original communication. In any case, IT will be absorbing these costs within the GreenSafe program until June 30, 2009, in order to help with this transition.

Clarifications:
- A computer that is over 5 years old is assumed to be on a 6+ year rotation cycle
- Assets with an original invoice date over 5 years from the date of submission are considered to be over 5 years old
- A "complete system" is referencing a computer, monitor and any associated peripherals (such as speakers, mouse, keyboard).
- The $70 fee for a "complete system" is derived from $25 to dispose of a monitor, $42 to dispose of a computer (laptop or desktop), with $3.00 added on for managing the cables, mice, keyboards and other peripherals.