Department of Sociology Computer Laboratory Upgrades (3\textsuperscript{rd} Floor East Hall)

A Proposal Submitted to the College of Agriculture Computation Advisory Committee by The Department of Sociology
April 8\textsuperscript{th}, 2002

Proposed by:

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Dr. Robert Schafer
Department Head
107 East Hall
294-8312
rschafer@iastate.edu

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Dwight D. Dake
Computer Specialist, Project Leader
17C East Hall
294-8285
dddake@iastate.edu

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Victor Raymond
Sociology Graduate Student, President SOS
409B East Hall
294-9050
vraymond@iastate.edu

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S. Noor Tirmizi
Sociology Graduate Student
409A East Hall
294-8031
noor@iastate.edu
II. Project Overview and Expected Benefit

The department of Sociology’s main computing goals are to provide students and faculty with access to high quality facilities. To utilize these facilities to promote unique, stimulating pedagogy and improve computer literacy, while addressing the unique needs of the social sciences.

The department, in cooperation with the Computer Advisory Committee, has developed, maintained, and upgraded general use software as well as programs that have specific applications in the social sciences. We seek to continue to provide classroom and educational access to those specialized resources not supported elsewhere on campus.

To that end we have identified three areas of emphasis that support our long-range plans: quality facilities, access to those facilities, and the use of those facilities to advance computer literacy in the social sciences. With that in mind, our request is for funding of incremental upgrades to the lab in the form of the NVivo qualitative analysis software package and the addition of a wireless access point for both student and faculty use.

A. Description and intended purpose.

Recent past CAC funding provided the Sociology Department with new computers to upgrade the hardware infrastructure as well as to slightly expand the number of available workstations. While it is important to have new and faster machines, we also recognize the need to keep existing hardware and software technologies up to date. This project, while minor in comparison to a complete lab overhaul, will extend the life of some machines and expand sociology’s computer lab resources. To that end we request:

**Nvivo Software Package** - The installation of NVivo software will significantly enhance the qualitative research capacity of the department, as it provides valuable support for content analysis and interviewing research informants. Several individual faculty are involved in ongoing projects that either engage in qualitative data gathering already, or would benefit from qualitative data analysis in addition to the quantitative research being done. Students are increasingly expected to be familiar with software such as NVivo because of its utility and value in the field. The installation of this product is vital to fulfilling the department’s goal of providing classroom and educational access to these types of specialized applications *not supported elsewhere* on campus that are unique to the social sciences.

**Wireless Access Node** – Recognizing that the university is making a concerted effort to turn Iowa State into a wireless campus we have incorporated this goal as well. Through LASCAC funding this year we are installing a wireless access point to be used primarily by our graduate students in their office area of East Hall. Our proposal to AGCAC is to increase that coverage by installing another access hub in our main computer laboratory. The wireless access hub would allow lab patrons who currently own wireless access cards to more fully utilize the lab space as well as networked resources.

B. How facilities will be made available to students.

1. The computer lab in 311 East Hall is open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. to the general public. Sociology graduate students have keyed access to the lab 24 hours a day. Records kept by lab assistants indicate that on average, the lab is 80% full during a.m. hours and 95%-110% (Users doubled up on machines using specialized software) full during p.m. hours. Usage increases above 100% during midterms and finals week specifically.

2. Without students doubling up, the eleven computers in our small lab will serve that many students simultaneously. With the addition of the wireless access point that number will be allowed to increase. Often, students use the current desktop machines for basic Internet and E-mail access. The wireless hub...
will free some of those desktop machines to be used for their specialized software such as SPSS, SAS, NVivo and other specialized social science packages, by allowing students with wireless cards in their laptops to connect to the ISU network in the open work areas of the lab. The open work area can readily serve about six additional students.

3. These upgrades will not only benefit the fifty-three graduate students in the Sociology graduate program, but a significantly larger number of undergraduates taking sociology courses. Last academic year 120 students took Sociology 302 “Research Methods” where they were exposed to NVivo. This number will grow by approximately 30% in the future due to a reorganization of our methods classes that will open up seats to non sociology majors. In addition, there are an increasing number of professors who are being encouraged to expose undergrads to qualitative data analysis in classes not listed under the “Research Methods” moniker. In the classic chicken and egg scenario, the more installed packages of NVivo that are available we believe the number of students who will benefit will only increase.


C. Not Applicable

D. University facilities that would be needed for the proposed project. Specify the building(s) and room number.

Both of the requested items will be installed in the sociology department’s main computer lab located in 311 East Hall. The current machines in this lab are sufficient at this time to run the Nvivo software and no further upgrades to the facility are needed. The room is currently wired for Ethernet access on a wired hub setup. The wireless access point will hang off of a current open port on one of these hubs. The only facility upgrade for this would be a small amount of Ethernet cabling and a lockdown kit. Both of these, as well as the installation of all products will be handled by the department’s computer support staff. A sketch of the facility and the proposed location of the new items is included on page 5.

III. Support and Maintenance

Over the past 18 years, as a department owned lab, sociology has supported the lab with a large portion of its discretionary resources. The department spent more than $45,000 in direct allocations for upgrading and operating this facility last year. This includes a portion of two P&S positions to manage and maintain the facility. The department will continue to provide this support as long as it is economically feasible. The department will continue to pay for one of the two Graduate Assistant Lab Monitor positions, Ethernet and phone connectivity, printing costs and the salary of the departmental computer support technician who manages the upkeep and maintenance on this facility. In addition, this year the department will upgrade three of the lab machine’s RAM as well as bare the full burden of a new scanner and associated software. These two items are listed in the budget below.
IV. Budget

Full Itemized Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>AGCAC Funding</th>
<th>Other Funding</th>
<th>Source of Other Funds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hardware</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HP scanjet 5490cxi scanner</td>
<td></td>
<td>$400</td>
<td>Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>(3) 128 MB RAM Chips for existing lab computers</td>
<td></td>
<td>$200</td>
<td>Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wireless Access Point</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Software</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 NVIVO Licenses</td>
<td></td>
<td>$2,980</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Request</strong></td>
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<td>$3,480</td>
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Minimum Feasible Itemized Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Description</th>
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<td><strong>Total Request</strong></td>
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The ten requested Nvivo licenses will be added to the two currently owned licenses to fill all available computers.