

**Microsoft Vista/Office 2007/Office 2008
Implementation Planning Overview
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The ITS desktop support teams (Blue/Green) and other ITS staff members have started preparations for the introduction of Microsoft Vista and Office 2007/2008 to campus. This document summarizes the implementation plan. This plan description will be revised as needed.

Campus Move to Microsoft Vista OS

The Blue and Green Desktop Support Teams have been testing the Microsoft Windows Vista Enterprise Edition OS for several months. The present plan is to begin to introduce the OS on new college-purchased PCs beginning late in the second quarter of 2008, probably with new system replacements starting in May or June. There is no plan to have a “forklift” introduction. Instead, the OS will be introduced as systems are replaced on their normal cycle.

ITS has been purchasing “Vista compatible” systems for several months in anticipation of the upgrade, but has been installing Windows XP Professional Edition on those computers. These computers are ones that have adequate memory, disk space, and performance to support an upgrade to the Vista OS. It is possible that these Vista compatible computers will be upgraded from Windows XP to Vista, largely upon request and depending upon compatibility issues that could be uncovered. Current systems that are not presently equipped for Vista but that could be upgraded to a Vista compatible level will be considered for upgrade if the cost of doing so reasonably improves the utility of the system over its remaining life cycle. Older systems that are not presently equipped to support Vista and cannot be upgraded to a Vista-compatible level will be kept in service with their present operating systems until the end of the replacement cycle for those systems.

We anticipate Microsoft to release Vista Service Pack 1 prior to next summer, which should improve the stability and utility of the OS.

A recent survey of CLAC institutions and discussion on the ACM SIGUCCS list indicates that most schools are waiting until summer of 2008 or later for Vista introduction, as seems to be the case for corporate IT operations as discussed in several recent trade journals.

We also have some concerns about compatibility with existing campus software. For example, as of this writing ADP eTime, used on campus for to record hours worked by hourly employees and students for payroll, has yet to be certified for use with Internet Explorer 7. IE 7 is the Vista compatible version of the Microsoft browser. Another example is Trend, which is the campus anti-virus and anti-

malware solution. A Trend version that is compatible with Vista has only recently become available, and was installed on campus the first week of August. Configuration work and testing remain to be accomplished by the network and desktop support teams.

A major goal of our introduction plan for Vista is to minimize the disruption of ongoing work of campus computer users. Delaying Vista introduction until the summer of 2008 allows IT'S time to familiarize itself with the OS, give Microsoft time to move the OS beyond the dot-zero release, and to allow application vendors to certify their software for the OS.

Microsoft Office 2007/2008

Microsoft Office 2007 is the latest edition of the productivity suite for the Windows OS. Microsoft Office 2008 is the next planned release of the suite for the Macintosh.

Microsoft Office 2007 for Windows is presently available for distribution to Microsoft customers and is available to the College through its Microsoft Campus Agreement. At present, Microsoft plans to release Windows 2008 for Macintosh sometime in the first quarter of 2008, probably in January.

The current plan is to introduce Office 2007 en masse during the summer of 2008, probably about the same time we begin the Vista roll-out. The time between now and spring 2008 will be used to continue testing by desktop support team members, to assess the impact of the introduction on key uses of the applications in the suite on important processes such as Datatel reporting, a limited test introduction to key academic and administrative users, and the development of a training plan. Office 2007 has a significantly different interface from previous Office versions and the impact of the move on user productivity could be large.

One consideration with Office 2007 is a change in the default document format to an XML-based format. The default format for files created by Office 2007 applications is not compatible with previous versions of Office. Although it is possible with Office 2007 to save files in formats that are compatible with previous releases of Office, it is a virtual certainty that problems sharing files will occur. The desktop support teams are taking action to minimize the potential impacts by making the faculty and especially the academic support offices aware of the issue and by providing file converters to Office 2003 users and on lab computers. Web pages providing information about working with Office 2003 and Office 2007 are available on the ITS web site:

<http://www.grinnell.edu/its/office2007> provides an overview

and

<http://wm.grinnell.edu/its/office2007/convert> links to information for document conversion

Announcements directing attention to these web pages have been sent to the academic support offices staffs and the faculty.

The relatively large proportion of installed Macintosh computers is one factor in our decision to delay installation of Office 2007 for Windows on PCs. At present, as far as we can discover, there are no file converters for the Office 2007 XML formatted files for Macintosh versions of Office. We anticipate this would present reoccurring problems for faculty using Office for Windows sharing files with Macintosh users. Again, we have advised the academic support offices on this issue, but we are hesitant to aggravate the situation by moving to Office 2007 for Windows in advance of the availability of the Macintosh compatible version.

Personally-owned Computers

Many students and some faculty and staff members bring their computers onto campus for use on the network. We expect several challenges related to Vista and Office 2007.

Karen McRitchie has been in communication with new students via inserts in the admitted student packets. MS Vista Home Basic is not a supported Vista release for use on campus. (Microsoft neither recommends nor supports Home Basic on networks of the type and configuration deployed on campus.) Students who are considering purchasing Windows PCs for use on campus have been advised to purchase Windows Vista Home Premium Edition or a commercial edition of Vista. Students who bring Vista Home basic outfitted PCs will only be given limited assistance (no more than 30 minutes) from the Helpdesk to attempt to connect the PC to the network. Vista Home Premium Edition is available from the College Bookstore.

We have published no official statement to faculty, staff and returning students concerning use of Vista-outfitted PCs on the college network. A written statement will be published on the ITS web site soon.

Students arriving on campus with Office 2007 should not have a problem. We will be sending students a notice via email advising Office 2007 users to the file format issue and directing them to the previously mentioned web pages for additional information.

Comments, Questions and Suggestions

Please send you questions and comments to Mark Miller in IT Services (millerm@grinnell.edu) or to a member of your desktop support team.