



Opinion # 3

The University Park Undergraduate Association (UPUA)

of the 2007-2008 Session

February 13th, 2008

Be it Enacted by the Association, having been considered by the

Committee on Academic Affairs an

OPINION

Recommendations to the College of Education's EDUCATE Initiative

(Decided: [14/2/0])

Nature of the Problem:

The Penn State College of Education recently instated the *Exploring Directions in Ubiquitous Computing and Teacher Education* (EDUCATE) Initiative beginning with junior Elementary and Kindergarten Education and Secondary English Education majors in Fall 2008. According to the initiative's website, students will learn to utilize and make digital media (video, podcasts, etc) and "provide important opportunities for teacher education students to learn to facilitate meaningful teaching and learning in a variety of settings." This initiative requires students to purchase a \$1,500 MacBook laptop with the iLife software, stipulated by minimum specifications provided by the college. College administrators state that this initiative directly affects approximately 417 students eligible for entry into the two majors in Fall 2008, and all subsequent incoming classes.

Recommended Course of Action:

Response-

The increasingly technological K-12 school systems, changing education environments, and the need for highly qualified teachers have prompted new ideas in teacher education across the country. Although we recognize:

1. The importance of training educators to integrate technology in the classroom
2. The imperative that a highly-ranked Education program remain competitive and at the forefront of training future educators
3. The efficiency and simplicity that a "common digital toolset" provides

the cost of implementing this program is exorbitant for affected students. If the current market share of Apple computers is 8.1%, 91.9% of the students affected this year will need to purchase a new computer. This corresponds to roughly 384 students who need to buy a new computer before the start of the fall term, effectively costing students \$576,000 (at \$1500 per computer). Furthermore, many Education majors have noted the lack of support or information regarding computer re-selling, purchases of new computers, or the exact nature of the newly-designed courses.

The College of Education is treating the MacBook as a course requirement, such as a textbook. This is not an entrance-to-major requirement, which requires University Faculty Senate approval. In the future, requiring a \$1,500 computer may not stop colleges and departments from further requiring expensive software and technological tools. The

primary concern for students as a consequence of the EDUCATE Initiative is the escalation of out-of-pocket expenses that are beyond the cost of tuition necessary to attend Penn State.

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Recommendations for the College of Education-

1. Implement a computer loan program for students unable to purchase computers. Such programs are already in place at schools such as Seton Hall, St. John's and Villanova
2. Many courses are currently taught in the Apple computer labs on campus, which have the iLife software. Teach these new EDUCATE Initiative courses in the Apple labs and/or build new computer labs for instruction and student use outside of class, which is more cost-effective.
3. The College of Education should help subsidize the cost of new required purchases. The funds currently being raised for financial support by the college can be diverted to help all students replace and purchase computers.
4. Implement an optional elective course, or detailed workshops on making the transition from PC to Mac computers and utilizing the iLife software suite.
5. Support discounts for software and hardware upgrades through Penn State.
6. Help subsidize a computer buy-back program through the Penn State Computer Store so students who must purchase new computers to comply with the EDUCATE Initiative requirements can obtain fair prices for their used computers.
7. Allow students to tailor lower-model/older Mac computers to the required specifications.

Recommendations for the University Faculty Senate-

Enact legislation to cap one item purchases for course materials at 7% of the full-time in-state semester tuition rate.

Respectfully submitted,

Leah Liu

Eberly College of Science, Student Faculty Senator
Eberly College of Science, University Park Undergraduate Association Representative
Undergraduate Education Sub-Committee Chair, Academic Affairs Committee

Nicholas Heim

University Park Undergraduate Association, Student Faculty Senator
College of Education, University Park Undergraduate Association Representative

Eric Wertz

College of Earth and Mineral Sciences, Student Faculty Senator
College of Earth and Mineral Sciences, University Park Undergraduate Association Representative

Michael Yannes

Eberly College of Science
Delegate to the Academic Affairs Committee of the University Park Undergraduate Association

Representative Vote: 8/0/0

Chair Signature: Ralph Crivello

Committee Vote: 14/0/0

Signature of a UPUA officer:

President Hillary Lewis

The University Park Undergraduate Association