

Student
Street Address
City, CO 80110

July 16, 2016

Stephen Jordan, Ph.D.
890 Auraria Pkwy.
Denver, CO 80204

Subject: *Proposal to Purchase 20 SMART Learning Suite Subscriptions*

Dear President Jordan:

I sent the attached proposal to Dr. Michael Erskine, Interim Director of the Educational Technology Center, about purchasing 20 SMART Learning Suite subscriptions. As you are aware, enrollment in our STEM courses has increased over the past few years, and thanks to your commitment to inclusion, so has enrollment of students with visual impairments and other disabilities. Our SMART Boards are great learning tools, but their outdated software hinders their potential. I hope you will agree that my proposal will improve accessibility and the learning experience for all.

As a legally blind chemistry and engineering student, I can testify to the improved accessibility the SMART Boards provide. I can see the computer screen better than a traditional whiteboard. Unfortunately, I cannot easily mirror the SMART Board to my laptop because MSU Denver's current SMART Notebook license does not allow it. The IT department came up with a workaround using Skype. This solution does not scale well, because IT staff must spend several hours creating a local user account and installing the software in each classroom I use. Further, the instructor must manually share the screen with me at the start of each class. Sometimes the system fails, and the Helpdesk must be called to resolve the issue.

I recommend we take full advantage of MSU Denver's existing investment in the SMART Boards by subscribing to the new SMART Learning Suite. This subscription provides many collaborative and online features not available in our current version. Further, with the instructor's consent, any student may view or interact with the SMART Board presentation from his or her laptop or iPad. Each student need only install one application, then scan or type in a short code, to connect. This upgrade would benefit all students, not just those with disabilities.

At a projected total cost of \$9,500, I am confident that this proposal will usher our classrooms into the next era of collaborative learning. The enclosed proposal details the costs and methods. Please contact me if you have any questions. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely yours,

Student
Enclosure: Memo Proposal

MEMORANDUM

To: Dr. Michael Erskine, Interim Director, Educational Technology Center
From: Name, MSU Denver Student
Date: July 16, 2016
Subject: Software Upgrade Proposal

Overview

As you are aware, our enrollment in STEM courses has dramatically increased over the past few years. With this trend expected to continue, we should take full advantage of the SMART Boards we have so heavily invested in. I propose we purchase 20 three-year SMART Learning Suite subscriptions, to improve collaboration and accessibility for all students at nominal cost.

Background

Several years ago, MSU Denver purchased SMART Boards for 20 classrooms to facilitate interactive, media-rich learning, and to make instruction more accessible. The SMART Boards allowed instructors to save their electronic whiteboards at the end of a class and recall them the next class day, provide students with electronic copies of their whiteboards, and save them for future lesson planning.

The Access Center and IT Services have collaborated numerous times to facilitate access to the SMART Board screens for students with visual impairments and other disabilities. Often, the solution has been a cumbersome, manual implementation of Skype or other screen-sharing software.

Statement of Problem

The SMART Notebook software version currently installed in our classrooms, while functional, is now quite dated. Many competing institutions in the area, such as UC Denver and the University of Denver, have purchased newer products, and their students now enjoy a higher level of collaboration and accessibility.

Our current software license does not allow more than one screen, the instructor's screen, to be connected to the SMART Board at any given time. For Access Center students who need to see the electronic whiteboards on their laptops in real time, this limitation has come up repeatedly. Budget shortages in the past several years have prevented us from upgrading. The workaround of using a screen-sharing software such as Skype has been cumbersome and unreliable.

Need

The two trends of increasing enrollment in our STEM courses, and advancement of educational technologies in competing institutions, both support the need to update the SMART Board software in our classrooms. Further, the increasing number of students with visual and learning disabilities necessitates improved efficiency in our delivery of classroom accommodations.

Scope

The proposed plan includes

1. Methods of improving accessibility and learning collaboration in our classrooms.
2. Projected costs for software subscriptions and the costs to train instructors and staff.
3. A feasibility study, demonstrating that the plan is cost-effective and reasonable.
4. A synopsis of the attitudes we share across our institution.

PROPOSED PLAN

The purpose of this plan is to maximize the return on investment in our SMART Boards by upgrading their software to increase their functionality and accessibility.

Methods

As a progressive and inclusive institution, we can greatly improve the accessibility and collaboration in our SMART Board-equipped classrooms by upgrading their software.

Upgrade Hardware and Purchase Software Subscriptions

While purchasing brand new SMART Boards complete with the latest hardware and software is certainly an option, simply updating our software is a far simpler and more budget-friendly alternative. A survey determined that only five of the 20 PCs in our SMART Board classrooms are too old to run the new software. The remaining PCs were upgraded within the last two years and will last at least three more years. Further, all five of the instructor monitors attached to the old PCs are sufficient and need not be replaced.

The new SMART Learning Suite subscriptions will provide some exciting new features:

- the ability to view and/or control lessons from an iPad;
- collaborative learning activities and instant individual and group assessment; and
- the ability to record lessons.

Roll Out New Software

The new SMART Learning Suite upgrade can be rolled out to all 20 classrooms at once via a standard network installation script, and tested in just five minutes per PC. This process is routine and can be assigned to our network administrators as a regular business task.

Train IT Staff and Instructors

SMART Technologies has agreed to provide a two-hour on-site training session for five members of our IT staff at a cost of \$500 and at a date and time convenient for us. The company has further agreed to provide four separate one-hour training sessions at a total cost of \$1,000 on our campus for 20 of our instructors. Each training session can accommodate four to eight instructors.

Costs

Chart 1: Breakdown of Costs to Upgrade SMART Software

The following chart shows that the software subscription accounts for about half, the hardware accounts for about one fifth, and the training accounts for about one third of the total plan cost.

Breakdown of Costs to Upgrade SMART Software

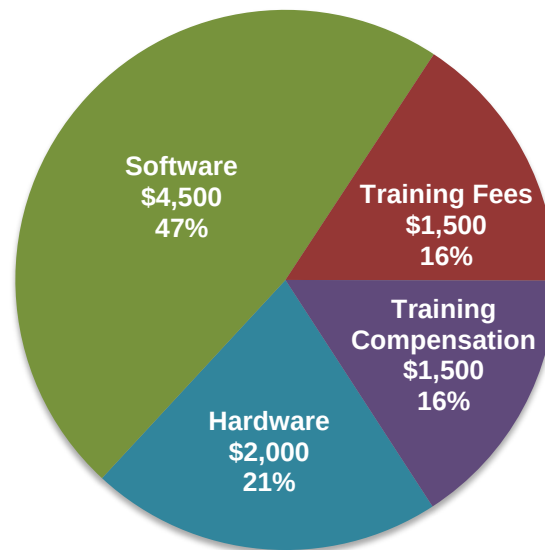


Table 1: Projected Cost and Requested Funding for SMART Learning Suite Subscriptions

This table outlines the costs for this upgrade. You will find this plan saves substantially over purchasing all new SMART Boards for the affected classrooms.

PROJECTED COSTS

Hardware and Software Costs

(5) Dell desktop PCs, higher education pricing	\$2,000.00
(20) SMART Learning Suite subscriptions, 3-year	4,200.00
(50) SMART Notebook for iPad "vouchers" for Access Center students	<u>300.00</u>
Subtotal	\$6,500.00

Training Costs

(1) Training session for 5 IT staff members, 2 hours	\$500.00
Compensation for 5 IT staff members' training time	500.00
(4) Training sessions for 20 professors total, 1 hour each	1,000.00
Compensation for 20 professors' training time	<u>1,000.00</u>
Subtotal	\$3,000.00

TOTAL FUNDING REQUEST	\$9,500.00
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Feasibility

At just over **\$13 per month per classroom** over the next three years, this plan is quite affordable. This plan saves over 90% over the prohibitive alternative of purchasing brand new SMART Boards, hardware, and software. This plan also makes sense because we have the in-house expertise to provide ongoing support for our existing systems and only require some initial training to get us started taking advantage of all the new features the new SMART software suite offers. Our dedicated and competent network engineers will provide excellent first- and second-tier technical support, and SMART Technologies includes full phone and e-mail support of software installation and usage with the subscription. Finally, the additional ETC fees collected from the increased enrollment will fully fund this plan within two semesters.

Personnel

MSU Denver is dedicated to providing its students with the most exciting, accessible, and inclusive educational environment possible within its budget. The professors, administrators, personnel, and students of MSU Denver overwhelmingly believe in quality, engaging, and collaborative education. We owe it to our community to continue to push the envelope, and this plan will help us do just that. Upgrading our SMART Boards to the latest software to enhance accessibility and collaboration is an action that furthers our mission “to provide a high-quality, accessible, enriching education ... in a multicultural, global and technological society.”

CONCLUSION

MSU Denver holds an enviable position as the most affordable public university in the State of Colorado while providing its students with a high quality, up-to-date, and personalized educational experience. To continue to fulfill our mission and uphold our reputation, we must invest in technologies that yield high long-term returns on investment. While budget shortages have prevented us from upgrading our SMART Boards in the past, technology continues to progress in the world around us. We owe our students the most collaborative, technologically advanced, and accessible classrooms our budget can provide. This affordable plan will bring new life to our SMART Boards and provide our students with the tools they need to succeed. At only \$13 per classroom per month, it will keep 20 of our classrooms on the leading edge of learning technology for the next three years.