

Meeting with Microsoft on Licensing Issues
Wednesday, December 3rd at 4:00 PM
CAUSE'97, Orlando, Florida

A meeting between higher ed CIO's and Microsoft representatives was held to discuss changes in licensing that affect the way that universities and colleges provide software to their campuses. It was a candid information exchange and a first step in what we hope will be an ongoing dialogue with Microsoft on issues critical to higher education.

Aleisa Spain, Director of Higher Education Marketing, met with the group to explain what the changes in licensing were and were not, to get feedback from the CIO's present, and to understand what an ideal licensing program would be for higher education. A summary of this meeting also appears in the Information Technology section of the Dec. 5 issue of The Chronicle of Higher Education (www.chronicle.com/infotech).

Ms. Spain explained that in 1995 all concurrency in licensing was discontinued, with the exception of two programs, in which only 15 institutions participated: Maintenance Plus and Open Advantage Plus. Microsoft's long-term strategy is to eliminate all concurrency and instead license on a per PC basis. The Product Use Rights Document, which is part of the End User Licensing Agreement, specifies when applications can also be used for home and portable computer use.

The audience listening to Ms. Spain was adamant that the per PC licensing model did not fit higher education and was not conducive to broad access to software tools, particularly for students. CIO's also emphasized that Microsoft needed to communicate its licensing strategy and the rationale for the strategy more effectively.

The qualities most desired in a licensing program were listed as:

- * flexibility (e.g., floatable licenses; if site license, not all applications bundled together and not too large a # to buy in)
- * low cost of ownership
- * ease of management
- * predicatability (change no sooner than every 3 years)
- * access to applications wherever the student/faculty/staff are (home/office/dorm/when traveling)
- * concurrent use (library model).

The audience challenged Microsoft to understand how universities operate and where they are headed in the future. We are looking for a partnerships, some said, and don't want to proliferate student piracy. What works for a small institution may not be ideal for larger ones, but there was a consensus that the qualities listed above are needed in an "ideal" licensing program.

Ms. Spain has promised that in early January Microsoft will provide ideas about a potential new volume licensing program for feedback from CAUSE members.

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