



Checkout Tablets For AS

Proposed Motion: Approve Funds Not to Exceed \$18,000 from FXXRES to purchase 12 Microsoft Surface Pro Tablets

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Attached Document

See attached specifications and quote.

Background & Context

In Summer 2013, the AS purchased 5 Microsoft Surface RT tablets, to be made available for checkout to students who wanted to use them for committee meetings, working outside their office, etc. The VU purchased an additional 9 Surface RT tablets—7 were dedicated to individual staff, and 2 were made available for checkout. This brought the total checkout pool of tablets to 7.

After 3 years piloting the availability of checkout tablets, we a good sense of their use. They are frequently used by the AS Board and Activities Council, but not by other committees or individual AS employees. A recent survey of AS employees and committee members provided the following data:

- 67% of respondents have never checked out a tablet from the front desk.
- 73% or respondents would consider checking out a tablet for meetings, if they could access email/Q Drive/Internet with it.
- 30% would consider checking out a tablet for daily work, instead of using the desktop computer in their office.
- 43% consider it a “Good Use of Student Funds” to purchase tablets for checkout, while 24% consider it a “Bad Use of Student Funds.”

We believe that, in principle, checkout tablets would be a beneficial resource for AS employees and students on committees, especially those who do not wish to provide their own laptops/tablets for committee work (or who do not have the financial resources to acquire these devices). We believe that the underutilization of the current pool of tablets is due to three factors:

1. The Surface RT tablets do not provide an automatic connection to users’ Q Drive, Email, etc. when they log in.
2. The technology of the current tablets is unsupported, meaning access to critical services like OrgSync is unavailable.
3. The checkout tablets have low awareness among AS employees due to lack of communication and promotion.

We propose to address these three issues with the purchase of Microsoft Surface Pro 4 tablets. The Surface Pro 4 provides a significant improvement in usability from the existing Surface RT tablets. With the new Surface Pro tablets, users will be able to log in with their WWU username and password instead of using a device-specific, shared username/password. U sers will automatically be connected to Outlook, the Q Drive, and all other resources that they can currently access from AS/VU computers. And the devices will use the Window 10 operating system, which will be activiely managed and regularly patched as part of the VU Tech Services automated workflow.

In addition to purchasing more usable, better supported devices, we will market their availability through AS Training and by working with the REP Committee Coordinator to make sure all AS committees are informed of the availability of the devices.

Summary of Proposal

We propose to purchase 12 Microsoft Surface Pro 4 tablets. Two will be held for use by the AS Board Assistants as needed, to take minutes at Board Meetings and other AS Committee meetings. Seven of the remaining 10 tablets are to be reserved during AS Board Meetings for Board members. All 10 will be made available for check-out on a first-come, first-serve basis at all other times that the VU Admin Front Desk is staffed. There are currently 7 checkout tablets in circulation, but we recommend increasing them to 10 (plus 2 for Board Assistants) to account for increased interest and use.

Fiscal Impacts

- One-time expenditure not to exceed \$18,000 from Discretionary Reserves, FXXRES
- Increase in the annual allocation to AS Computer Repair and Replacement Reserves (FXXCRR) not to exceed \$4500, to allow for replacement of the tablets on a 4-year cycle.

Alternatively, we could place a smaller order of 10 Surface Pro 4 tablets, for a one-time expenditure NTE \$15,000 from FXXRES and an annual allocation increase NTE \$3750 to FXXCRR.

Rationale

The Surface RT tablets were originally purchased in 2013 from FXXRES-ASBRTB. We recommend making this initial purchase from the same budget, and then allocating 25% of the purchase cost annually to the AS Computer Repair and Replacement Reserve (FXXCRR), so that the tablets can be replaced every 4 years as part of the annual replacement cycle.

There are more affordable alternatives to using Surface Pros for this—we could purchase iPads, Android Tablets, or Laptops. All three of those options would have drawbacks:

- iPads and Android tablets do not support multi-user configurations or native integration with services in our campus enterprise environment (like single-sign on with WWU credentials, or Q-Drive access). Going this route would cut the cost of the equipment in half, but take significantly more time and resources for VU Tech Services to support, and significantly reduce the ease of use and availability of services.
- Laptops do not have the portability of tablets, and their increased size will make storage more difficult. And laptops of comparable price to the Surface Pros do not use as many solid-state components, which means they are more susceptible to damage from normal wear and tear.
- Surface Pro tablets use the same operating system and applications as AS/VU desktop computers, and can be managed and secured using the same technologies that we currently use to manage and secure AS/VU computers. We can add them to our inventory without significantly increasing our management/support workload.

If, at the end of 4-year inventory cycle, we determine that tablet utilization does not merit continuing the program, we can phase them out of the inventory and return the accumulated allocation to the Discretionary Reserve.