Fixed Assets

You have probably been hearing about fixed assets—training, tracking, home use. What are fixed assets and why is accounting for them so critical?

“Fixed” does not mean immovable; rather, it means that the item is neither perishable nor consumable (compared to consumables like paper, toner, etc.). Requirements apply to fixed assets with an original value of $2000 or more and with a useful life of one year or more, and to any equipment purchased with Equipment Trust Fund money. The same property management rules apply to equipment that must be controlled, including personal computers.

Everyone has responsibilities to see that university resources are cared for appropriately. If a resource can’t be found readily, it may as well be lost. University policy calls for reasonable protection against theft, and “proper care, custody, control and safeguarding of all assets.”

Second, the university’s fixed assets compose part of the calculation of indirect costs (overhead) on grants and contracts. Indirect costs on sponsored projects cover things that are not specific to the project—electricity, space, clerical services, multi-use equipment, etc. An accurate inventory of these resources bears on the indirect cost recovery rate that Virginia Tech may collect. If the university cannot document such costs, then it effectively loses money with each grant.

Third, equipment that has been purchased under the Equipment Trust Fund is the security for the bonds that finance its purchase. The worth of the bonds depends upon the university having—and being able to locate—this equipment.

Finally, if the university has an accurate accounting of fixed resources, then planning for replacements and additions may be more effective and efficient.

Fixed Assets is a high-profile issue. If you have responsibilities for managing fixed assets, Fixed Asset Training is available through the Controller’s Office http://www.controller.vt.edu/

Test and Deployment Group

The Test and Deployment Group of SETI tests systems and applications developed by the Internet Application Development groups, and related systems and applications with a focus on security. Members of the team are Kim Homer, Manager, and JR Fleeman, Test Engineer. A wage position is currently being advertised for an individual with knowledge of Linux to serve as a test engineer.

The test environment consists of five servers that are used to emulate production environments and products, and to maintain an issue-tracking system. The test group is working on the emulation of directory, authentication and portal services in order to provide effective preproduction testing. In addition, some testing is done in product-specific environments.

Recent projects have included testing for the NT end-of-life project, a security-related issue; tools and procedures associated with the VT Certificate Authority; changes to the password rules for PIDs and Hokies IDs; the new release of MyVT; and the fall rollout of SafetyNet; as well as Enterprise Directory-related tools for internal management of the directories. The team seeks to improve usability of IT-developed products and services, and to document any platform or browser limitations. They work closely with the Content and Knowledge Management group to assure that user documentation is appropriate.
FDI—Faculty Development Institute

Spring Faculty Development Institute workshops are currently underway. These workshops cover a wide range of topics of interest to faculty and staff alike and are offered in four major themes:

- Essential skills—Gain essential skills by learning Powerpoint, Acrobat, and security.
- Web development and instruction—Learn how technology can positively impact instruction through short courses on Blackboard, Dreamweaver, Silicon Chalk, ePortfolio, etc.
- Digital Content—Media development is at the heart of this theme and includes video production, audio production, Photoshop and others.
- Research topics—Short courses on topics of increasing interest to researchers are highlighted here. These include grant writing, EndNote, LabVIEW, Matlab, SAS, Luna Insight, and others.

One-on-one help is also available for individuals with unique needs. Descriptions and registration for over 140 workshops can be found at https://www.fdi.vt.edu/spring/2005/. FDI is organized by the staff of Educational Technologies within Learning Technologies.

Internet Native Banner

Internet Native Banner (INB), the pathway to the administrative information system through the web, has been an option for many months, with university-wide training last November. The Banner teams in Administrative Information Systems and in DBMS have been providing support and training.

INB is a part of the technical migration to web-based systems by Virginia Tech, the Banner vendor, and the underlying Oracle infrastructure. INB works well with DSL and cable modem connections, while maintaining a familiar look-and-feel to Banner forms. Instructions for installation can be found on http://www.computing.vt.edu/administrative_systems/banner/web_forms/index.html.