APPENDIX C:
P.8 V. Equipment and facilities recommendations

English Department Computer Lab Rationale

Our students write on computers. Our students do research on computers. Our students communicate with one another on computers. Many of our students are more comfortable using technology than we are, and they produce better, more informed, and better articulated work when they have access to computers. The personal experience of our faculty members who have taught elsewhere as well as considerable research shows that composition and reading students benefit from being able to use networked computers in the classroom. The English faculty desperately needs to have a computer lab in which to teach.

Seven years ago Lisa Palmer was hired by Cañada as a "technology-mediated English instructor." Imagine her surprise upon realizing that there was no technology to mediate. This was seven years ago, and the situation hasn't much improved. Palmer came from Skyline, where the English department has access to two networked computer labs, each with enough computers for every student, projection capabilities, and the networking software to do innovative and effective English instruction. Instructors rotate their classes through the labs, allowing ample time for each course to meet in the lab once a week, and it is a highly effective system.

What does the English department have at Cañada? Approximately six years ago, through the valiant efforts of a former English department faculty member and the generosity of an individual donor, we were given a small computer lab housed in the Learning Center. While this resource is better than nothing, those computers are not networked, there are only 12 computers whereas our courses currently have upwards of thirty students (!), the "classroom" has no computer projection capability, and the "classroom" lacks walls. Each of these issues limits the space's usefulness.

Now that we have integrated what used to be a separate Writing Lab component directly into the English 836 curricula, we must be able to work with students on their writing in the classroom. We made that change to our curricula to satisfy the need of the college to save money. We've added students to our courses, beyond what best practices suggest, to save the college money. Now, to assist our students in learning the skills we're teaching, we desperately need a networked computer lab.

Why is a computer lab an essential component in English composition and reading instruction?

- Most of our students live in a computer-mediated world, so they are familiar with computers and enjoy working with text on the computer screen;

- Some of our students don't have access to computers elsewhere, so they need to learn to use the resources others take for granted;

- Computer-mediated instruction provides students the opportunity to use various types of intelligences, including visual and auditory as well as verbal;

- In a computerized classroom, both the typically non-verbal and the outspoken student have the same opportunity to "speak up" in writing, and research documents the importance of this inclusion and participation;

- A computerized classroom creates opportunities for writing-rich collaboration;

- In the reading classroom, interactive software programs allow students to practice and improve upon the hierarchical reading our media-rich environment requires;

- Issues of academic integrity have become more pressing than ever, and the best way to teach the evaluation and documention of sources is to model these skills;

- A networked computerized classroom will allow for real-time conferencing for online classroom discussions, giving students practice articulating their thoughts in writing while participating in discussions.

Finally, though we wish Cañada could have invested in more and better computer-facilitated classrooms earlier, right now we are in a position to learn from the experiences of our colleagues at CSM and Skyline to make informed decisions about what to purchase and how to use it. In addition, the low price of computers today provides an outstanding opportunity for the English department at Cañada to finally get up to speed on what is essential for a college located in, of all places, Silicon Valley—computer mediated English instruction.

Estimated Costs (consultation with the district ITS office):

Computers $1,900/unit + tax $156.75 x 30 units = $61,702.50
Printers $1,600/unit + tax $132.00 x 2 units = $3,464.00
Smart Classroom construction related cost: $6,500.00
One instructional Aide $ 16.00/hour x 25 hours/week x 40 weeks = $16,000

Total: $87,666.50