Frequently Asked Questions about ADS

General

1. **What does Academic Department Support do?** Since merging with Administrative Department Support in 2010, six full-time ADS employees maintain non-teaching-lab computers, software, and peripherals for faculty, staff, and students in 13 academic departments at Mines plus all administrative departments. (Other groups maintain computer teaching labs, AV equipment, web services, networking, servers, and enterprise-wide systems.) The term "ADS" now applies to both academic and administrative department support -- "All Department Support," in other words.

2. **What academic departments does ADS support?** Currently, the Library and all academic departments *except Petroleum Engineering* are supported by ADS. A number of unaffiliated entities, such as the Minority Engineering Program, are also supported by ADS.

3. **What are your support hours?** ADS staff are generally available 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except during school holidays.

Helpdesk

4. **How can I request help?** Submit a Mines Help Center ("Helpdesk") support request at http://helpdesk.mines.edu and it will be routed to the proper support group. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

5. **How is help allocated by ADS?** ADS staff typically are assigned far more support request than can be handled at one time. As a result, support priorities must be set. ADS strives to give departments, and individuals within departments, equitable and commensurate levels of support, using these principles: Teaching needs come before faculty or research needs. Issues that affect many users are more critical than issues that affect only a few. Fully supported users come before self-supported users. Systems that once worked but are now broken take precedence over projects that can be planned. Older requests take priority over newer requests. Note that priorities may change seasonally (for instance, configuration of computers for new faculty may take precedence when school starts in the fall). Also, departments or individuals with proportionally fewer support requests may be prioritized over departments or individuals who request more than their expected share of support.

6. **What level of support can I expect?** Service varies by customer type: "Self-supported users" (those who have and use administrator- or root-level accounts on a machine) are generally not supported by ADS, or supported on a time-available basis. "Fully supported users" (who do not generally own administrative rights on their computer) are, as the term suggests, fully supported by ADS. Most computer users on campus choose to be fully supported.

7. **Who sets computer support priorities within my department?** Departments are encouraged to work with ADS to set appropriate priorities. If departmental interaction is not forthcoming, ADS staff will set priorities themselves.

8. **Who is the ADS support person in my department?** All ADS staff work in all supported departments. There is no single person assigned to a particular department.

9. **I have further questions about ADS support. Who can I call?** Ed Zucker (x2460) manages the ADS group.

Software

10. **What operating systems does ADS support?** Only operating systems that are currently maintained and updated by these companies are supported by ADS: Microsoft (Windows), Canonical (Ubuntu Linux), Apple (OSX). Computers with obsolete and no-longer-supported operating systems must be upgraded – or removed from the campus network for security reasons.

11. **What operating-system versions are currently recommended?** Microsoft Windows 7 Professional or later, Ubuntu Linux 10.04 LTS or later, or Apple Mac OSX 10.6 ("Snow Leopard") or later.

12. **Does ADS support other operating systems?** ADS will help with other operating systems when able, but other operating systems (e.g., non-Ubuntu Linux distributions, UNIX distributions, and obsolete versions of Windows or Mac operating systems) are generally not supported. Exceptions are occasionally made for software that runs only on older OS versions.

13. **Are phones and PDAs supported?** ADS will attempt to provide configuration support for Apple, Blackberry, and Android phones and devices on a case-by-case basis, as able. However, given the hundreds of available phones and PDAs, ADS obviously cannot promise support for all operating systems on all devices.

14. **Should I install an antivirus program?** An antivirus program is *mandatory* for all Windows users. Symantec Endpoint Antivirus is available free to all Mines faculty, staff, and students – for use on all school-owned or personally owned Windows machines. Download Symantec Endpoint here: http://ccit.mines.edu/Antivirus. Antivirus software is recommended, but not provided, for Mac OSX and Linux users. (Linux users may install the free, open-source ClamAV program.)

15. **Should I use a firewall?** Yes. All current operating systems have a built-in firewall. It should be enabled at all times.

16. **What other security software should I install?** ADS staff can recommend appropriate supplemental anti-malware software.

17. **Somebody gave me this software CD. Will you install this program for me?** ADS staff may only install legally licensed software. Software without proper license is prohibited on school-owned computers (and strongly discouraged on personally owned computers). Customers may be asked to demonstrate that the software is legally licensed.

18. **Can I get [software package] installed free?** The Colorado School of Mines and Mines departments license various software packages in various ways. Some software is free. Some software must be purchased by individuals or departments. Some may be used for teaching, but not research (or vice versa). Some is purchased and licensed for installation across campus. Please check the CSM Software page – http://ccit.mines.edu/Software – for details regarding particular software packages.

Hardware

19. **I'm going to buy myself a computer from my research funds. You'll work on whatever I buy, right?** ADS will attempt to support any make and model of new computer. However, ADS staff are most familiar with the hardware and warranties of certain brands (particularly Dell and Apple). Standardizing on a few preferred makes and models increases the efficiency of ADS repairs. Feel free to ask ADS representatives for a recommendation on particular hardware, software, and preferred computer brands.

20. **I'm thinking of buying a web server for my research group. Good idea?** In general, consolidating and centralizing resources makes them easier and more efficient to support. When a centralized resource exists – as in the case of web servers, file servers, print servers, license servers and other resources – we ask that these be used instead of individual solutions.

21. **Can I get a free computer from ADS?** Departments must purchase computers for faculty, staff, and students. Teaching labs are often furnished via Tech Fee funds paid by students. However, a limited number of older machines purchased with Tech Fee funds are available for reallocation – primarily for use by grad students, secondarily for unsupported faculty such as adjuncts.

22. **My hard drive failed on my desktop computer. Do you have a spare you could give me?** ADS will fix warrantied hardware on school-purchased computers, or arrange to have it repaired by the manufacturer. Occasionally, a spare part may be available from ADS stocks without charge. However, purchase of out-of-warranty replacement parts is ultimately the responsibility of the machine owner.

23. **My laptop broke. Will you fix it?** ADS will arrange for school-purchased, warrantied laptops to be repaired by the manufacturer. However, except for user-serviceable parts such as RAM and (usually) hard drives, ADS does not have the facilities to repair laptops.

24. **My personal laptop broke. Will you fix it?** Personally owned systems are not supported.

25. **My computer broke. Can you come to my house to fix it?** For reasons of liability, ADS staff are not allowed to work off campus (including at the Edgar Mine).

26. **A computer in my research lab broke. Will you fix it?** Computers used purely for research are generally the responsibility of the research group and outside the focus of ADS.

Customer Responsibilities

27. **Are you backing up my computer for me?** Customers are ultimately responsible for their own data. Computing Center staff back up shared network drives periodically – but only those shared drives. Individual computers are not generally backed up. ADS staff recommend that all users make a separate backup of any data they do not wish to lose. ADS staff are happy to recommend various types of backup strategies.

28. **Do I need to worry about security on my computer?** While antivirus software, firewalls, and other security measures are employed at the campuswide level, users should follow best security practices on their own machines as well. *Self-supported users* must maintain their own systems securely, with up-to-date antivirus software, firewalls, security patches, and strong, unique, and private passwords. *Fully supported users* should watch for and report potential security problems and maintain strong, unique, and private passwords (maintenance of antivirus software and updating of operating systems will be performed for the user by Computing Center staff).

29. **Is it really a problem if I install unlicensed software on my computer?** Violation of software license agreements is a crime and can result in civil and criminal penalties and fines. Unlicensed software is the responsibility of the individual who installs it. The individual assumes all liability that may result from violation of license terms.

30. **I submitted a Mines Help Center request but ADS closed the support ticket before the problem was resolved. Why didn't the problem get fixed?** Customers must be available to provide further information and physical access when ADS staff are notified of a computer problem. Generally, if the customer is unavailable, the support request will be closed until the customer is available to work with ADS staff.

31. **I asked for computer support through Mines Help Center, but ADS staff just asked me a lot of questions. What's up with that?** When submitting a Helpdesk request, the more information that is provided the faster support can be given. A support request that says only "My computer is broken" will require more time (and questions) than one that lists the exact text of error messages, the make and model of the computer, the operating system, a history of the problem, and so on. Full contact information with email address and phone number is also useful.

32. **I have six computers that need to be set up by Friday. Can you do that for me?** Maybe not. In general, when there is advance knowledge of an upcoming computer issue, it should be shared with ADS, via Mines Help Center, as early as possible. Please let ADS know what work is needed and when it needs to be completed.