Questions to Consider for Hardware and Software Acquisitions

1. **What are the benefits of acquiring this solution?**
   Often times individuals arrive at a solution that has been viewed at a conference or meeting with other colleagues. The solution may be an excellent one but a feasibility study and evaluation of alternate solutions may not become a part of the process of selection. In addition the benefit analysis may not address the total cost of the solution (see below) or all of the system administration issues associated with the decision, such as backup, archival, security, or disaster recovery requirements.

2. **Does this solution already exist on campus or can other departments or colleges use it?**
   It is possible that a solution proposed for your department or college, or a similar solution, has already been purchased and implemented elsewhere on the campus. A solution that can be used by various areas, such as advising, may have broader capabilities that can be used by the University as a whole, and should be considered at the Enterprise level.
   In addition, there is significant cost incurred by the University when individual areas each buy their own solution.

3. **What burden is placed on your department or college in the support of this solution?**
   Have you discussed this initiative with your own IT department? A significant burden in terms of human and financial capital is placed on each area that supports a technology initiative. It is important to consider total cost of these solutions. Would your department or college benefit significantly from a central supported application freeing your IT individuals to support the research and academic initiatives?

4. **Does this solution require interface to existing applications that contain student, employee or financial data?**
   The purchase of a solution must address whether it is standalone or requires access to data associated with the systems of the University. The purchase of a solution should not be done in a void! System access at the enterprise level requires interface definition and programming, security clearance, and permission from the data stewards! Don’t purchase a solution only to discover that these issues have not been addressed!

5. **Have you included the Office of Information Technology (OIT) in the evaluation process?**
   It is wise to consider the inclusion of the OIT systems, software, security, and networking staff in the process of discovery, design specifications, security, and implementation support. If other systems of the University are to provide data, OIT must be able to certify that the interface to the systems can be programmed and supported.

6. **Is your solution to be supported centrally or locally?**
   If your system is to be supported locally, i.e. within your department or college, have you considered the backup, archival, and disaster recovery requirements? In addition, the physical and IT security
capabilities must be considered. The various compliance issues related to sensitive data mandate that you assume responsibility for the integrity and safety of the records. If you choose to have OIT support and administer the systems, the staff of OIT must be involved in the planning and implementation, not as an afterthought.

7. **Are you familiar with University Purchasing Policies, the Bid and Request for Proposal (RFP) process and the purchasing and legal (contractual) procedures that must be followed?**

   The University of Alabama must follow the State of Alabama Bid Law while also adhering to the University policies and procedures relating to Purchasing and P-card. It is your responsibility to gain knowledge from the proper individuals related to the process as it applies to hardware, software, and services. All major acquisitions must go through the process. Purchasing can provide guidance regarding these issues if requested. The matrix (see below) can provide you with additional information.

8. **Have you included the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) for the proposed solution?**

   It is important that you address the issues of cost beyond the initial purchase. Funds should be encumbered to account for the next 5 years with maintenance, operations, and replacement of assets being included. In addition account for the cost of Human Capital.

9. **What are the next steps?**

   There are several steps that you should take in your planning for the purchase of a new software and hardware solution:

   A. Make certain that you have involved the IT individuals in your college/department in the evaluation process.

   B. Involve Purchasing in the process to avoid complications in the acquisition. The contact is:

      a. Melinda Wallace, Contract Administrator, mwallace@fa.ua.edu

   C. Involve the Office of Information Technology (OIT) in the process. Their team can better assess the overall impact that your initiative has from the networking, security, backup and recovery perspective. In addition, they can provide guidance regarding the legal and purchasing requirements of the University. The contact is:

      a. Patty Benton, Executive Director, patty.benton@ua.edu