



Avoiding Costly Data Errors

3 Common Mistakes that Drain Your IT Budget

Table of Contents

- 03 Introduction
- 04 **Mistake 1:** Are You Paying for Software that Isn't Used?
- 07 **Mistake 2:** Are You Letting Computers Collect Dust?
- 09 **Mistake 3:** Are You Keeping Labs Open Too Long?
- 11 Summary



Introduction

In the world of higher education IT management, where every dollar counts, avoiding costly mistakes is more crucial than ever. Yet, many organizations inadvertently drain their IT budgets through common data management errors.

Recent insights from the NERCOMP and EDUCAUSE communities shed light on effective strategies for negotiating software licenses. However, a crucial component is often overlooked: **usage data**.

Accurate and comprehensive usage data can curtail unnecessary expenditures. For colleges and universities, LabStats is a pivotal tool, providing deep insights into hardware and software utilization. Armed with this knowledge, higher education CIOs can make informed decisions and prevent making common mistakes.

These mistakes not only impact financial resources but also hinder operational effectiveness and strategic decision-making. In this ebook, we'll explore three of the most prevalent data mistakes:

1. **Paying for software that isn't used.**
2. **Letting computers collect dust.**
3. **Keeping labs open too long.**



From financial savings to operational streamlining and improved student experiences, the potential gains are manifold. By harnessing tools like LabStats to scrutinize usage patterns, institutions can tailor their IT strategies with precision, ensuring resources are deployed where they are most needed.

MISTAKE 1

Are You Paying for Software that Isn't Used?

Software costs have risen significantly for colleges and universities. Well-intentioned CIOs are struggling to meet the needs of a large user base with complex software needs and a dwindling budget.

There are multiple strategies to negotiate software licenses. According to a [recent presentation](#) shared via NERCOMP and EDUCAUSE, the following strategies can create leverage when negotiating software deals:

- Executive relationships
- Existing and future commitments
- Timing
- Benchmarks
- Publicity
- Opportunity to gain experience

What's missing from this list of strategies?
Usage data.

Accurate software usage data can revolutionize how IT teams optimize software licensing and reduce unnecessary expenditures. Colleges and universities rely on LabStats to gain deep insights into software utilization, providing them with the knowledge to make informed decisions during software license negotiations.

“We had no way to track the usage of programs in our labs. Many of our programs were either gifted to us or supported by alumni, so being able to report on their usage was critical. We needed a program that allowed us to track usage in an easy-to-use-format.”

Anne Anderson, Associate Professor, Lehigh University

Whether IT departments are navigating the complexities of software renewals or striving for more cost-effective operations, LabStats offers solutions tailored to the unique needs of higher education institutions.

Challenge 1: Site-wide licenses and blanket deals

Busy CIOs often purchase site-wide licenses to cover all potential users within the institution. These blanket deals simplify the procurement process, create predictable budget cycles, and ensure that every student has the applications they need.

However, these large-scale deals eat up precious budget dollars. Over time, institutions end up paying for unused licenses year after year, while other projects go unfunded due to budget restraints.

Conducting periodic license audits is crucial for efficient software management. LabStats data can help prevent over-purchasing and minimize waste.

To audit software licenses with LabStats, start by analyzing the maximum concurrent usage (the number of instances where the same applications are used simultaneously) of high-end software for maximum budget impact.

Consider these strategies when analyzing software usage data:

- **When maximum concurrent usage is low:** If the maximum concurrent usage throughout the semester is significantly below the total number of licenses, IT

teams can reduce the number of licenses, freeing up budget resources for other needs.

- **When maximum concurrent usage is high:** If the maximum concurrent usage is consistently high and approaches the total number of licenses, a detailed analysis is necessary. Examine individual computer labs and classrooms to identify those with the highest demand, considering variables like lab location and hours of operation.

Challenge 2: Blind Software Deployment

Higher ed IT teams may conduct surveys or consult with faculty to determine which software is essential for various courses and create a plan for where it should be deployed.

Although this qualitative data is valuable, it's limited. Quantitative data, such as current software usage per location, is necessary to optimize software deployment.

LabStats provides location-based software usage data, along with discoverability tools for ongoing software optimization.

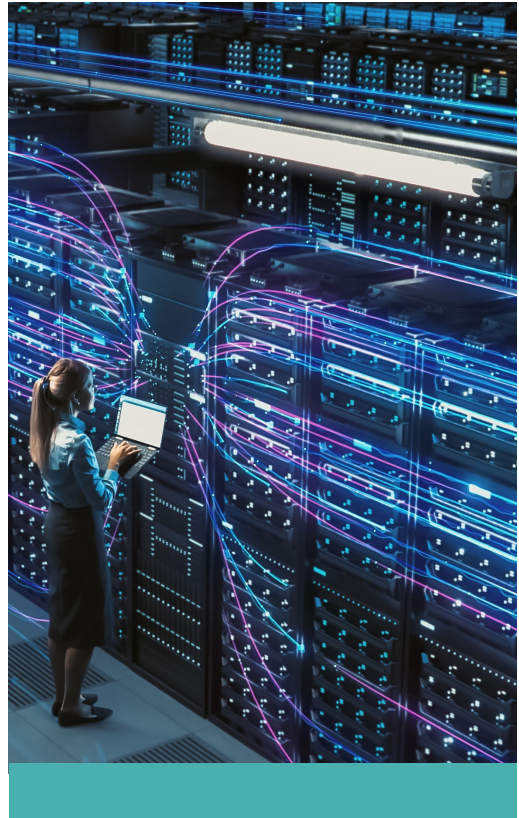
LabStats' discoverability tools, including LabMaps and the Remote Access Dashboard, direct users to underutilized computer labs or virtualized resources. These tools help students and faculty quickly locate the necessary software (either in person or virtually) while enabling institutions to precisely match software availability with demand.

The enhanced API endpoints in LabStats can also be used to develop navigation apps compatible with an institution's mobile app. By using the address or GPS coordinates from the college's or university's technology center and the default map application on students' mobile phones, a seamless experience is ensured.

Proven Savings with Usage Data

When software contracts come up for renewal, use LabStats data to negotiate more favorable terms. Demonstrating data-driven usage patterns can lead to significant cost savings.

For instance, at a large commonwealth university, LabStats data proved that less than 5 percent of enrolled students used any Adobe Suite product in a given year. The staff used this data to negotiate a **\$300,000 reduction** in its Adobe bill.



LabStats, trusted by thousands of colleges and universities worldwide, can monitor hundreds of software applications, providing valuable data for CIOs. By implementing these strategies and leveraging data-driven insights from LabStats, higher education institutions can enhance software licensing and deployment, resulting in cost savings, improved resource allocation, and a more efficient IT environment tailored to the unique needs of each institution.

MISTAKE 2

Are You Letting Computers Collect Dust?

Higher ed CIOs can save or reallocate a significant portion of their IT budget by right-sizing hardware. This could mean reducing computers in different areas across campus.

Benefits of reducing hardware:

- **Cost Savings:** Reducing hardware lowers maintenance costs related to power, heating, cooling, and network access.
- **Increased Efficiency:** IT staff can focus on high-priority tasks instead of routine maintenance of unused computers.
- **Optimized Resource Allocation:** Machines can be moved to departments or campuses where they are needed most, maximizing their utility and doubling the savings.
- **Support for Students and Staff:** Unused machines can be loaned or donated to students in need or staff working from home.
- **Reduced Maintenance Needs:** Fewer machines mean lower maintenance and support costs.

Monitor Hardware Usage in Real Time

LabStats monitors usage of both in-person and remote computers, so IT teams can see when, where and how long students are using hardware and software on campus.

Real-time reports like [Peak Usage History](#) show traffic trends, so teams can see if computer labs are at or near capacity.

What does LabStats track? The following is a list of LabStats computer usage reports:

- Summary of logins by location, user, or machine
- A historical timeline of active sessions
- Average number of logins on a single computer, lab, or classroom
- Average usage history of a computer by week or day
- Peak times computers or labs are accessed
- Inventory of computers

Knowing how computer labs are used in real time can help IT teams move computers or assign stations to be remote-only without negatively impacting the student experience.

Switch to Remote Access

[Colorado State University](#) noticed that about half of their computers were sitting idle before they implemented the LabStats [Remote Access Dashboard](#).

The Remote Access Dashboard displays live computer availability for virtual use, along with a simple “Connect” button so students can remote into campus computers using a VPN. This allows IT teams to maximize computer usage.

In conclusion, right-sizing hardware with the help of tools like LabStats not only saves costs but also enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of IT operations, ultimately improving the educational experience for students and staff.



“Not only did the solution make access easy for students, it alleviated some of the demand on the servers because students started logging in to computers that had been sitting unused in vacant labs.”

Gary Senseman, Director of Information Technology for the Warner College of Natural Resources, Colorado State University

MISTAKE 3

Are You Keeping Labs Open Too Long?

Optimizing computer lab hours can lead to significant savings and an improved student experience. Instead of setting lab hours and forgetting them, use tools like LabStats to track usage and spot trends.

For example, determine if the library lab needs to stay open late before finals, if smaller labs can close early on Fridays, or how many assistants might be needed in a lab with specialty devices like 3D printers.

What Students Look for in a Computer Lab

When it comes to choosing a lab, students are discerning. Here are the main factors they consider:

- **Lab Size:** Students want to know if a computer will be available when they arrive. Overcrowded labs are frustrating and arriving at a computer lab just to discover that it's closed is discouraging.
- **Noise Level:** A noisy environment can be a major distraction. Students prefer labs where they can focus on their work without constant interruptions.

- **Installed Apps:** The software available in the lab is crucial. Students need access to specific programs for their coursework and projects, so a well-equipped lab is a significant draw.
- **Location:** Proximity matters. Students are less likely to use a lab far from their usual routes or inconveniently located.
- **Space for Group Work:** Computer labs are no longer used in a one-to-one ratio. It's typical to find a group of students huddled around a single computer to work on a group project.



Use Case: Emerson College

At [Emerson College](#), COVID-19 significantly changed how the institution viewed and utilized their computer labs. It also accelerated the shift toward remote and virtual software.

However, even before the pandemic, there were questions about the value of computer labs. Students increasingly brought their own devices, and software became more accessible outside dedicated spaces. Traditional computer labs were often underutilized, with specialized hardware and software sometimes only benefiting a small number of users.

Usage data from LabStats revealed that the number of users decreased by 50%, post-COVID. However, overall usage time only dropped by 28%, indicating more intensive use by fewer students.

“In Fall 2019, the labs I was analyzing were accommodating about 4,000 unique users. Now we’ve stabilized around 2,000. So the number of people logging into labs has actually halved, and yet the amount of time the computers themselves are being used, has only fallen by about 28%.”

Francis Frain, CISSP Assistant Vice President Information Security and IT Infrastructure, Emerson College

This has led to reevaluating lab spaces, closing underused labs, and repurposing them into more effective environments like collaborative spaces or offices. The shift also underscores the need for data-driven decisions in managing resources, and highlights the growing importance of flexible solutions like loaner laptop programs to meet diverse student needs.

Using Data to Optimize Lab Hours

Use a combination of the following three LabStats reports to get detailed information about lab usage. This is especially helpful for schools with tight budgets and aggressive savings goals.

- Start with an overview of lab traffic over a whole semester to see when students use your lab the most and least, with the *Peak Usage History Report*.
- Then drill down to see the average activity level for each day of the week with the *Average Usage History by Week Report*.
- Finally, see the average time of day that your lab gets the most use with the *Average Usage History by Day Report*.

IT teams can also utilize the [LabStats API](#) and [Power BI Dashboard templates](#) to dive deeper into computer lab usage.

This data-driven approach ensures lab resources are utilized efficiently, benefiting the institution and its students.

Summary

Higher education CIOs can significantly optimize their IT budget by right-sizing hardware across campus. Reducing the number of computers can lead to substantial cost savings and also increases efficiency by allowing IT staff to focus on high-priority tasks instead of routine maintenance. Moreover, reallocating machines to where they are most needed maximizes their utility, providing support to students and staff through loan programs or donations. Using tools like LabStats to track usage and adjust lab hours based on actual demand can further enhance savings and improve the student experience. By understanding and responding to technology preferences, CIOs can better meet the needs of students and faculty. Additionally, leveraging usage data can strengthen negotiations for software licenses, helping to balance complex needs with a tight budget.

What is LabStats?

LabStats revolutionizes the way universities harness data insights to optimize their technology ecosystem. As a nimble, cloud-native solution, LabStats seamlessly integrates into campus infrastructure, empowering IT teams to effortlessly capture and analyze usage data across the entire campus network.

With a frictionless deployment process requiring minimal time investment, LabStats swiftly begins gathering valuable usage metrics, offering immediate visibility into software and hardware utilization trends. Its robust monitoring capabilities extend to hundreds of applications, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the software landscape. Leveraging insights gleaned from extensive collaborations with institutions worldwide, LabStats provides a tailored experience, streamlining the selection and tracking of software categories and applications during setup.

The flexibility of LabStats extends beyond its intuitive interface, empowering IT teams to customize reporting settings to align with institutional objectives. Whether exporting data to pre-configured Power BI templates or seamlessly integrating with internal analysis tools through the LabStats API, institutions can effortlessly tailor their data analysis workflows to suit their unique needs.

LabStats delivers organized usage data in a format that resonates with the institution's preferences. Through detailed hardware and software usage reports, IT teams gain actionable insights to drive data-driven decisions, optimize technology resource allocation, and streamline budget allocations, ultimately enhancing the student experience while maximizing operational efficiency.



For a no-pressure consultation about how LabStats can help your institution, [schedule a 15 min call](#) – we'll be happy to help.