MEMORANDUM

February 23, 2009

To: Academic Senate and Ray Rosentrater, Chair
From: Wayne Iba, for the ARC
Re: Call for conversation – using technology appropriately

THE ARC REQUESTS a wider discussion of our recommendation: that a "wireless-free" zone be preserved somewhere on the campus (perhaps the formal gardens) as the plan for full wireless coverage is conceived and implemented.

Given the increasing ubiquity of computers, cell phones, music players, etc., the Academic Resources Committee has discussed what might be for our community an appropriate level of saturation with respect to information technology. Of equal or greater importance, we have considered how we can lead students into the conscious deliberations that are necessary in order to determine an appropriate level. We suggest that a purposeful choice to set aside a defined area *without* wireless, will have several positive benefits for our community.

- It will model for our students a proactive approach to adopting new technology rather than simply buying into whatever the current (or next) development that comes along.

- It will provide a space for people to step away from cell-phones, email, and media entertainment in order to stop, center, pray, or listen.

- It will demonstrate that as a community, we value the benefits derived from information and communication technologies but also recognize the responsibility to adopt and use them appropriately.

Currently, Westmont is considering (moving toward) upgrading our coverage to the latest wireless networking standard (802.11n) and providing that coverage across the entire entire campus. We welcome the improvement of our information technology infrastructure. However, as with any introduction of technology, many factors need to be considered. We need to anticipate as many unintended consequences as possible. There may prove to be factors that overwhelmingly support the implementation of a particular technology (even in the face of anticipated negative consequences). For example, in the case of campus-wide wireless, the expectations of our "clients" may lead us to accept this roll-out.

The purpose of the recommended conversation should be viewed as determining (i) how much we value the cultivation of student deliberation skills in the area of technology adoption, (ii) the best way to accomplish our stated values, (iii) and if a "wireless-free" zone will advance those goals. Without such a conversation, we will not have any confidence that our course of action is the best for us; perhaps we will not even know why we are moving in the direction we are. Finally, we will not be conscious of ways our lives are being changed by technology (for good and for ill). Thus, we recommend such a conversation.

Thank you for your consideration.