What follows are some thoughts and comments about the goals of the new microprocessor and word processing committees.

Aaron's original outline of this committee's charge asked for a report in time to be included in the coming year's budget. That means by the middle of May, about, seven weeks from now. We think we can have something done by then, but we will be painting with a broad brush and there will still be lots of details to be worked out.

The microprocessor committee currently consists of Gary, Alex, Bernie and myself plus Gavin Eadie, Eric Aupperle and Mark Hersey. I'd rather not make the group any bigger. We did talk about having one or two committee members from outside the Center, but are now thinking about asking several users for advice without actually giving them formal membership. Several people on the committee agreed to serve only after they were assured that the committee's work wouldn't drag on forever. If our work somehow runs much beyond the middle of June we will have to review the committee's membership.

Our goal will be to outline a general philosophy for increased support of microprocessors and to identify several specific areas where our immediate efforts should be focused. For each area we'll make a good guess at the level of staffing and budget needed to do the work. We'll also try to identify who within the CC should have responsibility for organizing the area and getting things started. Many of the details about exactly what is to be done in each area will have to be left to the staff that eventually takes responsibility for the work. This is probably how it should be. In any case, with the limited time and staff available, there isn't any alternative.

To start we'd like to put most of our efforts into the question of microprocessor support. Once we've worked out a general philosophy we can go on to consider specific application areas like word processing. However, some initial data gathering about word processing can be started soon to save some time in the overall process. We think that the word processing committee's charge should be broadened to include consideration of other application areas and how they might best be supported (on a central facility like MTS, on smaller systems or some combination). One of the first application areas to be studied would be word processing.

At Friday's Committee A meeting we would like to consider how ambitious the Center's plans should be. Are there any general guidelines on what we should consider possible or impossible? Would, doubling the CC's staff be out of the question? How about a 50% increase? 25%?

In a brief discussion this last Wednesday Gary, Alex and I outlined four possible approaches that we might take to provide microprocessor support. They form something of a continuum.

A discussion of the merits of each by Committee A would go a long way toward giving us some guidance. Of course there is no reason that we can't adopt different elements from each approach. Listing the approaches is just an attempt to provide a starting place for discussion.

1) The Status quo

This includes what we are currently doing plus those things we plan to do: the various MCP programs, file transfer, file access, visual editing of MTS files, access to page and line printers and plotters, •.•. This work is largely outlined in the CC's 3-year plan. The common element in all or most of this work is that the hardware/software of the central facility is always involved. There is a lot of work planned and it will involve most of the groups within the CC: Communications, Systems, Application Support, and Publications.

2) Passive Support

This type of support involves providing extensive user services for microprocessor users. The CC's staff would become knowledgeable about a wide variety of microprocessor systems in use on campus and provide assistance to users. This assistance might include advice on purchase, help with using the hardware and software systems, repair of systems, maintenance of an extensive library of material on these systems, …. Support would no longer be limited to microprocessor use in conjunction with the central system. We've· called this passive support, because the CC would limit itself to giving advice to users while leaving final decisions to the individual users.

3) Active Support

This type of support also involves providing extensive user services. It is called active support because the CC would select â few hardware and software systems and applications to support. Discounts might be worked out with hardware vendors or the CC might even resell systems to University users. Relicense agreements might be worked out with software vendors. Where quality application software isn't available or where reasonable relicense agreements can't be reached the CC might develop software of its own. Passive support for other systems might also be available, but we would actively encourage people to use the supported systems if at all possible. Public stations would include a number of the supported systems.

4) Development

Here the CC would work to develop a software system of its own or adapt a, system and associated applications from another sources. We would attempt to provide a truly integrated service, one where users would have access to similar' working environments as they moved from system to system. The distinction between services provided locally, services available through a network and services available from a central facility would be deliberately hidden.

Jeff Ogden April 7, 1983

[In the above:
Aaron is Aaron Finerman, Director of the UM Computing Center
Alex is Alex ????, CC staff member working on the Word Processing Project
Bernie is Bernard Galler, CC Associate Director, Professor of Computer and Communications Science, PI of the Word Processing Project
Gary is Gary Pirkoka, CC Associate Director]