New rates cut computer costs

By Kent Plitman

Rate decreases which took effect at the beginning of this month are expected to significantly reduce the cost of computer processing on the Multics computer time-sharing system at MIT.

"We have unused capacity," noted Michael Burstein, Director of Information Processing Services (IPS). A complicated rate schedule, which charged separate rates for the amount of time that users were connected to the computer, for time used by the central processor in computations, and for disk memory space, has been simplified to a single flat rate cost for the time for which users are connected.

According to statistics furnished to The Tech by IPS and the Student Information Processing Board (SIPB), the average cost per hour during off-peak hours under the new rates will be at least 30 percent less than usual, a feature that IPS hopes will make Multics more desirable to members of the MIT community.

One notable effect of the new schedule is felt by users of the SIPB Educational Calculator System (ECS), a small subsystem using a language similar to BASIC. Until recently, the system ran under the control of a "governor" which monitored all programs run in ECS and controlled the amount of processor time used by them.

Since the new rates charge only for contact time and not for processor time the restricting device has been removed, and it is now possible to use ECS for much larger calculations than were previously feasible.

Additionally, for projects which require large time expenditures, a flat rate of $700 per month will provide "unlimited interactive usage through one guaranteed-access port." This service provides for an arbitrary number of users, but only one may log in at a time.

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