Windows Server Software Licensing Information

Windows Server software is available for purchase at steep discounts to WMU faculty, staff, and departments, for university-related activities.

There are two editions of Windows Server currently available via the WMU Microsoft SelectPlus agreement: Standard Edition, and Datacenter Edition. Windows Server Standard Edition is generally sufficient for any normal needs. Datacenter Edition is normally reserved for computers with more than four physical processors, or a server that will host many Virtual Machines.

Core Licensing – Both Standard Edition and Datacenter Edition employ core-based licensing; that is, they are licensed based on the number of processor cores found in the server, irrespective of the number of physical processors in the box. Core licenses are sold in pairs, and a minimum of 16 core licenses (8 pairs) must be purchased for each physical server.

Server Licensing and Virtual Machines – If you license a server with Windows Datacenter Edition, you are entitled to run unlimited virtual machines on that server. If you run Windows Server Standard Edition on your server, you are entitled to run one virtual machine without an additional license. For each additional VM, you must purchase an additional Windows Server license with the same number of core licenses as the server on which the VM runs.

Special note for VMware Servers – The licensing guidelines outlined above pertain equally to servers running VMware server software as Windows Servers running Hyper-V. That is, you must purchase Windows Server Datacenter Edition for the server (even though you use VMware as your hypervisor), or purchase Standard Edition for each VM running under the VMware hypervisor.

Software Assurance – WMU purchases Windows Server software with three years of Software Assurance. Software Assurance grants the right to upgrade to the latest version of the software, as well as downgrade to an earlier supported version. Software Assurance also grants the right to move the software to another physical machine. At the end of the third year of Software Assurance, you must renew Software Assurance, or you will not be permitted to upgrade or move your software.

Rule of Thumb – Windows Server Datacenter Edition is generally more cost effective than Standard Edition if you plan to run eight or more virtual machines on a single server.

About Client Access Licenses (CALs) – Windows Server software requires a Client Access License for each user, but the Office of Information Technology has purchased Windows Server CALs for all university users. Therefore, it is not necessary to purchase CALs with your server license.