

- 4 -

1 specific software entities, it is appreciated that the invention is applicable to any plurality of software entities required to support a system feature. Specifically, the invention will be described in terms
5 of OS software and SPP microcode such as a TCU for an IOM. In the Unisys Corporation A-Series computer systems the OS is referred to as a Master Control Program (MCP). The invention may also be applied to the MCP and an IOU for the IOM.

10 Additionally, the invention may be applied between OS software and a System Library, between two user applications or between any independent software entities capable of exchanging data in the manner to be described by its best mode embodiments.

15

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invention includes an interface and protocol between first and second software entities of a system (e.g., OS software and SPP microcode) for the exchange
20 of indications of system features requiring mutual support. During the exchange process, each software environment (e.g., OS or SPP) will examine the other environments supported features to determine which features are mutually supported and therefore usable.
25 The interface is preferably utilized during system initialization and prior to use of such features. If a feature is not mutually supported, appropriate action is taken. If the non-supported feature is optional, it will not be enabled. If the feature is required,
30 the system will report the error and/or halt.

The following new enhancements are provided by the mechanism of the present invention.

1. Optional and required system features may be developed and released independently by
35 software development groups such as the OS and SPP development organizations.
2. Support releases, for example, OS or SPP,