

COMMITTEE ON COMPUTING AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS 2012-13 Annual Report

To: Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division

The Committee on Computing and Telecommunications (CCT) considered a number of important campus technology issues throughout 2012-13. CCT heard regular updates on the progress on the Telecommunications Master Plan—now known as the Telecommunications Infrastructure Upgrade (TIU)—monitored the changing landscape of UCSC’s learning management system (LMS) eCommons, worked with the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) as the university forged a partnership with massive open online course (MOOC) provider Coursera, and commented on a variety of important policy proposals.

UCSC’s Learning Management System (LMS), eCommons

Through consultation with Director of Learning Technologies Jim Phillips, the committee received updates on the status of UCSC’s LMS, eCommons. The program was developed by a team of universities but three of the main contributors—Indiana, Michigan, and UC Berkeley—abandoned eCommons in 2012. Though eCommons offers an open source code, UCSC pays a third party, rSmart, to host it for the campus. rSmart committed to continuing to develop the program, but the departure of the three major university partners means that eCommons may not be a long-term solution for UCSC. rSmart was acquired by Asahi Net International in spring 2013.

The campus will update to eCommons version 2.9 over the summer of 2013 and hopes that version 3.0—currently in development—will show enough promise to continue to serve faculty and student needs. The university is currently not committed to eCommons after 2014. CCT noted the varying levels of satisfaction with eCommons, but was encouraged by the responsiveness of Director Phillips and his team regarding necessary patches. CCT concurred with Director Phillips’s suggestion to form an “LMS Taskforce” to work in 2013-14 to survey the landscape of LMS across the country and advise IT on the future LMS at UCSC. Potential members of this taskforce include CCT members, members of the Committee on Teaching (COT), and Committee Educational Policy (CEP).

Consultation with VCIT Mary Doyle and Updates on IT Infrastructure Plans

CCT benefited from regular consultation with VCIT Doyle throughout the year, most of which focused on the ongoing upgrades to campus IT infrastructure. IT developed a ten-year telecommunications master plan, now known as the Telecommunications Infrastructure Upgrade Project (TIU). One main component of the TIU is to create a second telecommunications core at the base of campus. Currently, there is only one fiber path to campus, and this would create a loop to protect the campus from outages. UCSC filed a proposal with the California Public Utilities Commission for the installation of fiber optic cable from campus running south to the city of Soledad. This would not only be a redundant line for campus, but also a valuable source of fiber access for underserved communities in south Santa Cruz County. On campus, IT also plans to rebuild telecommunications core closets in buildings and transition from cable to internet television in the residence halls. Campus will also move from standard phone service to voice over IP.

Extension of Student Email Accounts after Graduation

In its winter meetings, the committee expressed concern that undergraduate and graduate students lose access to their UCSC email accounts after graduation. Many graduate students use their UCSC email accounts while going through the publication process, and academic journals may email them for edits or reviews after students have lost access to their accounts. Some graduate students are hesitant to use their UCSC email addresses for any correspondence because they know they will eventually lose access. The committee looked at the post-graduation email policies for the other UCs and found that seven campuses offer forwarding services for alumni, allowing them to continue to receive messages that are sent to their university email addresses.

VCIT Doyle used this information and decided to institute a forwarding service to match the other UC campuses. In the short term, student email accounts will be extended for one year after graduation. CCT recommended that the forwarding service be established before June 2014 to ensure that all current students will have access to this service.

UCSC's Partnership with Coursera

On February 20, 2013, Campus Provost/Executive Vice Chancellor (EVC) Alison Galloway announced a partnership between UCSC and Coursera, a platform for massive open online courses (MOOCs). The contract between UCSC and Coursera lays the foundation for individual faculty to potentially offer courses in this online format. CCT was not asked to review the partnership contract before it was signed by the EVC, but the committee took a lead in critically examining its implications. CCT consulted with Professor Ira Pohl, senior adviser to the EVC for online courses, seeking more details on the Coursera contract and campus plan for development of courses. The committee then wrote to the EVC, asking for a summary of the contract, assurances on the protection of faculty ownership of course material, and a campus plan for Coursera course development.

CCT worked with the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) to address these same issues. A preliminary plan from SEC proposed to establish a committee to vet and select UCSC Coursera courses. This committee would be made up of the chairs or designees of five Senate committees: Computing and Telecommunication (CCT); Educational Policy (CEP); Planning and Budget (CPB); Teaching (COT); and Graduate Council (GC).

Other CCT Business

CCT consulted with analysts Nancy Degnan and Georgina Chang from the UCSC Academic Personnel Office (APO) regarding the development of an online academic review system to replace the paper-based process currently in place. APO surveyed online review systems—including partial systems—at the other UC campuses, and the consultation with CCT was part of their process of engaging stakeholders at UCSC. Their goal is to have a new system live as of May 2014. CCT advised analysts Degnan and Chang that APO will have a lot of work to do engaging the faculty, particularly those that are used to the review system as is. CCT also inquired about the cost of developing and sustaining an online review system. The committee was assured that APO has analyzed the costs, including the space and materials needed to continue with the paper-based system, and the online system will be cost-efficient.

CCT also consulted with Director of Core Technologies Doug Hartline and Director of Real Estate Lisa Akeson. The committee was seeking more information on UCSC's relationship with Crown Castle International, the third-party company that manages many of the leases of cell tower equipment on campus. Historically, the topology of UCSC made cell phone coverage deplorable on campus, and the lack of an adjacent metropolitan area made cell phone companies disinterested in improving service. A UCSC staff member developed an idea known as a distributed antenna system (DAS) and created a company known as NextG with a third party. As a pilot for NextG's DAS, UCSC became one of the best connected campuses, with all five major carriers represented on 13 DAS sites. NextG was acquired by Crown Castle in 2012. Crown Castle owns the shared equipment on the DAS towers and they negotiate with carriers on UCSC's behalf, sharing 25% of the space lease revenue with campus, bringing in ~\$120,000 a year. This return to campus, a 27% revenue share, is relatively high for a college campus.

CCT learned that there are two forms of cell sites on campus, DAS and macro tower sites. The macro sites are the primary hubs for the carriers and the signal then goes through fiber optic cable to the DAS. The carriers are upgrading all of their cables from copper to fiber to support long-term evolution (LTE) technology. They lease space at the macro sites from UCSC, and these sites are not mediated by Crown Castle International. Another benefit of this agreement is that campus gets access to extra strands of fiber. Cell companies only need two strands of fiber, and because fiber is run in strands of 96, the campus is able to use the remaining 94 for its own purposes.

CCT indicated an interest in arranging for an annual consultation with the Core Technologies and Real Estate offices in order to stay abreast of these important telecommunications issues.

CCT also discussed and commented on the following systemwide and divisional proposals:

- Proposed Open Access Policy (November 21, 2012);
- Proposed Anti-plagiarism Software for UCSC (February 15, 2013);
- Updated UCSC Wi-Fi Policy (February 15, 2013).

Respectfully submitted,

COMMITTEE ON COMPUTING AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

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