

COMMITTEE ON COMPUTING AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Annual Report 2010 - 11

To the Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division:

The Committee on Computing and Telecommunications (CCT) met bi-weekly as needed this year to work on several issues, in addition to routine business. Issues this year included the Information Technology Services (ITS) External Review, the campus Telecommunications Master Plan, the Regents' Resolution on Administrative Efficiencies, the upgrade to the new voice mail system, web conferencing tools, status of the campus learning management system eCommons (Sakai), Google Applications including faculty and staff gmail, and the systemwide Online Instruction Pilot Project.

ITS External Review

ITS underwent an external review this year. CCT provided commentary and suggestions on the department's self-assessment document and met with the external reviewers in a dedicated meeting in late March. Committee members commended the creation of a budget for upgrades to ITS needs on campus and strongly supported increasing this budget to improve the technological infrastructure of campus, particularly the network and server hosting space. An ongoing maintenance budget should be an integral part of the capital plan to move the campus away from a "break-fix" approach in supporting our technological needs. Consideration needs to be given to the utilities, such as electricity and cooling, that are integral to running functions like the data center. The committee also questioned the low priority placed on open-source programs and freeware. There is general agreement that the bidding process is biased in favor of non-open source, since, of course freeware and open-source products don't bid. The committee strongly recommended ITS ensure their processes for assessing new software/vendors fairly considers open-source and freeware. This should also extend to ensuring ITS staffing is able to support open-source. CCT recommended a decision-making process that better includes campus member participation. Finally, members emphasized in discussion with the reviewers the need for sufficient data center capacity, either local or remote, to support critical campus data processing needs.

Telecommunications Master Plan

UCSC contracted with WTC consulting services to develop a strategic telecommunications plan to improve the reliability of the campus infrastructure. The plan provides a roadmap to ensure that the availability, services, and bandwidth of the campus' telecommunications infrastructure keep pace with campus growth and needs and "future-proofs" the campus from stranded infrastructure investments.

WTC conducted two presentations for CCT members during the year. The first occurred mid-fall and provided an overview of a ten-year improvement plan to the campus infrastructure, including voice, data, Wi-Fi, cellular, and television, as well as a budgetary breakdown. In the initial consultation, WTC provided eight different configurations of the infrastructure re-design, with cost ranging from \$75.5 million to \$97.8 million. Costs included capital cost, refreshment, maintenance, related FTEs, and system growth. After assessing the viability of each configuration, WTC recommended two, each close in cost to approximately \$87 million with

operating costs over \$3 million, for serious consideration. Members raised questions about the use of wired versus wireless, and how the plans allow for incorporation of new technologies as they emerged. The second, and final, presentation occurred mid-winter. To address concerns raised by various campus constituencies, and to address the budgetary crisis that arose after the previous presentation, the consulting firm amended the plan to compress the timeline from ten years to five, removed the implementation of cellular service and in-building penetration to reduce cost, and banded the foundation and building work to fit a reduced budget of \$37 million and annual operating cost of \$2 million.

Regents' Resolution on Administrative Efficiencies

The goal of this resolution is to improve systemwide efficiency by using the same systems for various operational functions throughout the UC system if possible. There is now a commitment to use a common payroll system; currently, there are eleven separate payroll systems used in the UC system, so this will require major adjustments to business practices at all UCs. A Request for Proposals for a payroll system closed in March; work should begin mid-July 2011. Similar action has also been taken towards a common Human Resources system. There is currently no clear structure in place to facilitate the implementation of common systems, and the UCSC administration is very reluctant to move forward until this issue is rectified. A large initial investment will be required to move to common systems, yet it is unclear what the resulting cost savings will be. The committee expressed concern about how the unique pieces at the different campuses will be preserved. All campuses have been directed to implement the same system. Work has also begun on developing a systemwide approach to contracting with companies such as Oracle. All purchases will be done by the Regents.

New Voice Mail System

The voice mail system in place at the beginning of the year was implemented in 1991. The service contract expired and vendor support has been unavailable since 1999; additionally, equipment replacement parts are no longer available. A contract was negotiated with Blackbox to upgrade to a new voice mail system with better stability, providing additional features such as Caller ID, message forwarding, greater mailbox sizes, and the capability for unified messaging (integration with e-mail and other message mediums). Members requested more information on how integration with e-mail would work, and questioned whether consideration to the use of GoogleVoice as another option was considered, particularly if the Google contract goes through. Trainings were provided prior to implementation, and a period of time was allowed for migration to the new system. ITS is the department responsible for support and management of the voice mail system.

Web Conferencing Tools

The UCs currently do not support the use of web conferencing tools. CCT consulted with Learning Technologies Director Jim Phillips to discuss options available. Possible tools discussed included EVO, available through CalTech; Skype; Elluminate, AdobeConnect, and ReadyTalk, with which UC currently has a contract. ReadyTalk is, however, primarily a telephone conferencing tool. Although there is a web component available, it is cumbersome. CCT recommends adoption of a streamlined, integrated solution. All committee members agree

the selected tools should be available for all faculty and staff and should provide easy access for anyone join a web conference.

eCommons

CCT consulted with Learning Technologies Director Jim Phillips to discuss eCommons, the Learning Management System implemented this academic year. While some members felt there are one or two slight inadequacies in eCommons, functions such as the quiz/test and gradebook modules, that are addressed better by such products as Moodle, members did share that they have heard several comments from faculty that the move to eCommons was smooth and the LMS works fairly well. One concern is accommodation/accessibility; eCommons is supposed to be 508 compliant but is not yet. ITS has recently set up an assistive technology committee to help address this. Members discussed ways to improve eCommons, such as incorporating open source code, and programs such as MathJax, WebAssign, and Aleks. Director Phillips noted that a new version of Sakai (eCommons) will be available in the near future. The committee requested an opportunity to preview this version and make recommendations.

GoogleApps for Education

UC has been negotiating over the past year a contract with Google to use GoogleApps for Education. Members are hopeful that these applications will become available in the near future.

Online Instruction Pilot Project

This issue emerged near the end of the academic year. The Online Instruction Pilot Project (OIPP) is a systemwide project of online courses, open for enrollment by any UC student for credit; non-UC students may also participate in the courses. The initial expectation was that grants from foundations and fees paid by non-UC students would help to support this effort. Concerns emerged near the end of this academic year as the funding structure was altered significantly, with a UC loan providing most of the financing. Members echoed concerns outlined in a May Academic Council memorandum and felt there should be a joint Senate committee to address these over-arching concerns, as well as initiate discussion on the impacts to UCSC in particular.

Respectfully submitted,

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