

COMMITTEE ON COMPUTING AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Annual Report, 2009-10

To the Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division:

The Committee on Computing and Telecommunications (CCT) met bi-weekly this year to work on several issues, in addition to routine business. Issues this year included the implementation of the new web content management system on campus; online instruction review; response to the Commission on the Future Report; Gmail for students and consideration of Gmail for faculty and staff; ITS budget projections; ITS infrastructure plans for buildings, phones and other data needs; recommendations and the implementation of eCommons, the UCSC version of the Sakai instructional learning tool.

Web Content Management

At CCT's first meeting for fall quarter, members reviewed information about a web content management system that was going to be implemented campus-wide. Concerned faculty, especially from the School of Engineering and the Physics Department, felt that with the current budget crisis the choice for an outside source was too costly. They were also concerned that the commercial web content management system favored by ITS did not adequately implement dynamical updates of the web content. Although an attempt was made to bring the Drupal open source solution into the discussion, it is unclear if there was indeed balance in the process at that point. On one side was a company with a product to sell and representatives to make the case. On the other side was an open source solution with a few advocates within UCSC. CCT would like measures put in place to ensure that the RFP process gives open source a fair representation. In the future CCT would like a larger window for consultations on important campus-wide IT issues. ITS seems to agree that the initial RFP process was flawed and did not allow for an open source solution. Here are some questions CCT submitted to the chairs of the web content management committee:

1. How do we insure that the RFP process gives open source a fair representation?
2. How many units need to buy in to make a campus-wide solution viable/economical?
3. What is the value to the campus of having a widely adopted solution that fails to unify the campus community?

Senate collaboration is vital for the future of the campus as a whole. It is important to remember that we have faculty and technical expertise on campus and that by working together we can cost effectively bring change to the campus web page. As an example, we would like to point to the successful collaboration between SOE faculty and ITS (then CATS) staff in the rework of GARP that resulted in the system we have today.

Online Instruction

Online Instruction poses questions of great importance for UCSC, and for the University of California in general. This type of instruction appears to be successful for certain graduate

programs and for self-paced courses. Also, it can be useful for students currently enrolled at UC campuses who can't get the general education or other required courses they need on their own campus due to large class size or limited numbers of course offerings, but who could enroll remotely in the course on another UC campus.

The Report on *Remote and Online Instruction at the University of California* recommends that a pilot program be initiated to test the educational effectiveness and the extent of cost savings (if any) of offering major introductory courses on one UC campus to serve several other UC campuses. As of July 14, 2010, the UC Regents approved an online pilot program to be tested at UC Berkeley's Law School with a target date of Spring 2011.

It will be important to see whether such online instruction can include peer instruction and other benefits of in-class instruction. We are also concerned that such courses could disadvantage the smaller campuses of UC, or at least the affected departments, if the resulting reduced student population in regular courses ultimately leads to a reduction in teaching faculty rather than the desired freeing of faculty to teach more advanced courses.

Commission on the Future

In accordance with Senate protocol, CCT reviewed the report of the Commission on the Future within the committee's charge and only reported on on-line programs and degrees. There are UC on-line professional school and graduate degrees in place already. As already stated, this type of instruction appears to be successful for certain graduate programs and for self-paced courses. Also, it can be useful for students currently enrolled at UC campuses who can't get the general education or other required courses they need on their own campus due to large class size or limited numbers of course offerings, but who could enroll remotely at another UC campus. Having undergraduate on-line courses for certain high school and community college students is also good, and makes sense given the current economic climate.

CCT questions how realistic it is to think students could graduate in three years with the same quality, or for each major offered as recommended in the report to save on costs. Summer session does not offer advanced courses, so it is not realistically possible to graduate in three years for very many majors. Graduation and retention rates have been climbing steadily over the past several years as indicated by the table in Appendix B, although the report does not call attention to this.

CCT members expressed concern with differential fees based on tuition for popular majors at UC campuses. High tuition costs would affect the middle class most. The report suggests that popular UC campuses like UCLA and UCB could get away with charging more, but not the other less popular UCs. The University Office of the President (UCOP) should recognize that the smaller campuses have become leaders in specific fields, such as Astronomy and Engineering specialties at UCSC.

Another issue of concern is with research. The Office of the President (UCOP) may try to negotiate larger overhead rates, thus skimming off higher percentages of the grant money faculty receive. UC would in that case be less competitive, with less money for researchers

to spend on data collection and analysis. This could make UC a less desirable institution for researchers.

Gmail for Faculty and Staff

During our final meeting of spring quarter, Vice Chancellor of ITS Mary Doyle announced that ITS will be asking for comments from the campus community on switching our email to Google or paying UC Berkeley to host our email. There seems to be little advantage in paying UC Berkeley to host our email. Google's Gmail is being used by staff at the Lawrence Livermore Labs as a pilot program and is reportedly going well. The VC would like to implement Gmail starting some time in the next academic year. By freeing up ITS staff, this will save money, as required by our budget problems. ITS plans on hosting town hall discussions on faculty and staff Gmail during fall quarter.

Respectfully submitted,

COMMITTEE ON COMPUTING AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

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