

COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY Annual Report 2020-21

To: Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division

The Committee on Information Technology (CIT) is charged with advising on acquisition, implementation, utilization, and impact of instructional technology, information systems, software and electronic communication facilities, including wireless service. The 2020-21 academic year was largely focused on issues related to remote instruction and the COVID pandemic. Summaries of major work may be found below. Representatives from CIT additionally served on the Canvas Steering Committee, the University Committee on Academic Computing and Communications (UCACC), and the hiring and onboarding committees for UCSC's new Chief Experience Officer. Senate Chair David Brundage additionally represented the Senate on the new ITS Executive Steering Committee.

Collaboration with the Vice Chancellor for Information Technology

CIT once again invited Vice Chancellor for Information Technology (VCIT) Van Williams as a standing guest to attend the bi-weekly CIT meetings. During the 2020-21 year, VCIT Williams updated the committee on many Information Technology Services (ITS) activities, including IT governance committee charters and workflows, fall 2020 campus-wide ITS updates, IS-12 revisions, the UCSC website redesign project, the Accellion cyber attack and campus response, IT investment proposals, and UCSC data center needs and cost assessments. We also discussed UCSC commencement of academic activity, VCIT William's request for a faculty satisfaction survey, and faculty post-mortem email access, which was an issue that the Committee on Emeriti Relations (CER) raised with CIT in 2019-20. CIT would like to thank VCIT Williams for his continued collaboration and for being open to CIT feedback and recommendations.

Remote Instruction in the Context of COVID-19

As expected, several systemwide and campus reviews of proposed policies and procedures as a result of the pandemic were presented to the Senate and CIT. In fall 2020, CIT responded to the CP/EVC's request for feedback on the administration's planned approach to address the expected FY21 \$20M permanent reduction in state funding as a result of the pandemic.¹ CIT emphasized that Information Technology Services (ITS) is currently undergoing a transition of restructuring and suggested that ITS be given sufficient budget flexibility in order to complete its evolution under the current demands on the unit and the complexities of remote instruction and work.

In spring 2021, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs (VPAA) Herbie Lee requested the Senate's feedback on a proposed Remote Work Policy for Senate faculty. CIT raised concerns about the timeline and proposed restrictions, which do not currently exist in either the systemwide Academic Personnel Manual (APM) or the Campus Academic Personnel Manual (CAPM). CIT recognized the importance of in-person interactions in honoring commitments to teaching, service and mentoring, but also noted that virtual office hours and sections can provide welcome flexibility for

¹ Haddad to Brundage, 11/18/20, Re: Request for Feedback - UCSC Budget Cut Targets

students. If a remote work policy is created, CIT recommended adding guidelines for remote mentoring of graduate students, and details for remote course approval. CIT also suggested a “Remote Technology Checklist” to verify that hardware, software, and internet bandwidth are sufficient to ensure quality instruction.

Campus IT Resources for Faculty Instruction

CIT spent a good part of 2019-20 and 2020-21 collecting information on existing information technology (IT) instructional resources that are available to the campus community. During both years, the committee met with ITS Product Manager Leslie Kern who provided CIT with a comprehensive list of available resources. CIT has been eager to make these tools known to the greater campus community and requested that a list of these resources be posted on the Faculty Instructional Technology Center (FITC) and the Center for Innovations in Teaching and Learning (CITL) Teaching websites, that the link be shared in an email to the campus community and at the New Faculty Orientation that is run by the VPAA Office each fall, and that the list be searchable on both the FITC and main UCSC website². Our request was that this be done by the end of spring quarter 2021. Next year’s CIT may wish to follow up on this topic.

Manager Kern additionally suggested that a link to existing IT instructional resources could be written about in a teaching newsletter and possibly be included in “pop ups” in Canvas at the beginning of both the summer and fall quarters. CIT is in favor of posting the information broadly in order to reach more instructors and supports this proposal.

During a consultation with Manager Kern on April 28, 21, CIT was informed that two existing resources: iClicker and Scantron may be removed in the near future. CIT recommended that an email be sent out to all instructors informing them of the pending changes to see if there are any concerns and/or feedback that ITS should be aware of.

UCSC Website Redesign Project

In 2017-18, the Committee on Information Technology was informed that the UCSC main website would be undergoing a redesign project. At that time, and every year since, CIT has recommended that a formal request for Senate feedback be made on the proposed plans. CIT received additional project updates from University Relations in 2018 and 2019, but the Senate has not yet received a request for feedback. Concerned that the project is moving into its later stages without formal Senate and divisional consultation, in spring 2021, CIT wrote to Vice Chancellor of University Relations Mark Delos Reyes Davis, and VCIT Van Williams to request that a mid-implementation request for Senate feedback be initiated at the end of summer 2021 or at the beginning of fall 2021 so that Senate committees may opine in early fall.³ VC Davis and VCIT Williams responded to the request and informed the committee that due to new hires, they are in the process of reestablishing the project implementation structure and goals within University Relations and ITS, and agreed to seek formal consultation with Senate leadership in late summer or early fall 2021.⁴

² Takayama to Kern, 5/19/21, Re: CIT Consultation on 4/28/21

³ Takayama to Davis and Williams, 5/13/21, Re: Senate Consultation on UCSC Website Redesign

⁴ Davis and Williams, 5/27/21, Re: Campus Website Redesign

Data Center - Colocation Facility

Recognizing current inadequacies to accommodate for increasing faculty High Performance Computing (HPC) requirements, this year VCIT Williams informed CIT that ITS has undertaken a review of possible solutions, including an upgrade of the campus data center, use of a colocation facility in Washington State (already hosting HPC equipment from other UC campuses), and cloud computing. ITS's initial assessment suggests that maintaining a data center on campus may not be a viable solution in the long term due to cost of upgrades, cost of power, fire/earthquake hazards, etc., and recommends colocation and cloud computing as an alternative, with planning already underway for some HPC equipment to be hosted by the Washington State facility in the coming year.

Postmortem Email Access

In winter 2020, CIT received a request from the Committee on Emeriti Relations (CER) inquiring about the feasibility of creating a campus policy that would allow a faculty member to authorize one or more individuals to access their UCSC email account after death, akin to the legal status of an executor with respect to the UCSC email account.⁵ CER Chair Judith Aissen raised concerns about the lengthy process involving Campus Counsel that individuals who would like to gain access to the account, such as a research colleague or family member, must go through. Reasons for desiring such access could range from personal to necessary for the completion of research projects that are both collaborative and individual.

In spring 2020, CIT consulted with the VCIT on the topic, and was informed that drafting an IT procedure policy is feasible. However, CIT soon realized that such a policy is much more complex than just creating IT procedures as it would need to include academic freedom, privacy considerations, etc. In spring 2021, CIT wrote to Chancellor Cynthia Larive and Campus Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor (CP/EVC) Lori Kletzer to lay out the issue with associated systemwide, campus, and Gmail policies, and offered a list of possible policy/procedure solutions.⁶ Given that the appropriate solution for our campus would likely involve expertise that is outside of CIT and the Academic Senate, CIT requested that the administration charge the appropriate parties with defining and drafting a policy solution, which the Academic Senate and other stakeholders may review in 2021-22. The administration has scheduled a virtual meeting for administrators and Senate leadership and chairs to discuss the issue in July 2021. CIT looks forward to receiving a report from this meeting.

Additional Notable ITS Issues in 20-21

In spring 2021, CIT reviewed Vice Provost for Academic Personnel (VPAA) Herbie Lee's Charter for Online Programs Initiative and did not support the initiative to provide fully online degree programs. Members suggested that more work needs to be done to understand the investment necessary to create successful online degree programs at a research institution like UCSC. Teaching remote classes is not at all equivalent to offering a fully online degree. In addition, significant outside resources would be necessary to provide staff and ITS with the capacities to launch online degree programs, and it was not clear in the proposal where these funds would come

⁵ Aissen to Sadjadpour, 2/26/20, Re: Message from the Chair of Committee on Emeriti Relations.

⁶ Takayama to Larive and Kletzer, 6/14/21, Re: UCSC Email Access Post Mortem

from. The Charter proposal also failed to address how an online program would fit into the research side of the university nor how it would make up for the loss of the UCSC brand identity associated with redwoods by the sea. Further, CIT noted that there was no CIT representation on the Charter Workgroup. As such, CIT recommended an exploration of hybrid in-person and remote degrees and that CIT representation be included in all future online program workgroups and discussions.

CIT also raised concerns about a proposal to introduce a quarterly verification of students' commencement of instructional activity through a syllabus quiz, which may inadvertently cause new bureaucratic issues and place additional burden on faculty. To simplify the process by which faculty participate in this requirement, Canvas and MyUCSC should be linked in a one-step system of verification. There should also be a clear timeline for completion before a student would be dropped from a class.

Recommendations for 2021-22

In the 2020-2021 academic year, we found it to be incredibly productive to work closely with VCIT Van Williams to stay on top of current issues being faced by faculty and by ITS, especially during the global pandemic that forced us into remote and hybrid working arrangements. We encourage next year's CIT committee to continue engaging in these frequent discussions and close collaborations with ITS.

In addition to recommendations made above, the 2020-21 membership encourages next year's CIT to consider the following topics for the 2021-22 agenda:

VCIT Van Williams has requested a **Faculty Satisfaction Survey**. We encourage next year's CIT committee to meet with the VCIT as early as possible in the fall 2021 quarter to discuss, and decide on next steps in response to this request.

Given the changes in UCSC campus plans for **Unified Computer Management**, we recommend that next year's CIT committee revisit the plans for budgets for this program while also considering broader campus plans for items such as loaner laptops for students.

We encourage 2021-2022 CIT to follow up with VCIT Williams and Director Leslie Kern on whether campus IT resources for faculty instruction have been adequately communicated to new and existing faculty.

Finally, as ITS works through its planning for sourcing and supporting faculty needs for **High Performance Computing**, we recommend that next year's CIT committee closely monitor this developing situation and follow up with VCIT Williams on the logistical details (e.g., sunsetting time frame for equipment) and expected costs that may eventually be passed on to faculty for having their HPC equipment hosted at the colocation facility. If cloud computing is pushed as an alternative, then it will become important to discuss if and how UCSC would subsidize faculty for recurring cloud costs at a level equivalent to the services currently provided to faculty who have HPC equipment located on campus (data center or department buildings).

Acknowledgements

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Respectfully submitted;

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