COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
Annual Report, 2021-22

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 2021-22 academic year was largely focused on providing guidance to the administration and UCSC community on university and systemwide IT issues as described in the following report. Summaries of major work may be found below. Representatives from CIT additionally served on the University Committee on Academic Computing and Communications (UCACC), the Vice Chancellor for Information Technology (VCIT) Search Advisory Committee, and the VCIT Recruitment Senate Executive Committee Subcommittee.

Senate Survey on IT Priorities

In spring 2022, CIT launched a survey to help identify pressing technology needs. The survey was sent to Senate faculty (including Emeriti) and Adjunct Professors. Response rate was 27% with even distribution across divisions and a greater proportion of Full Professors compared to other ranks. The vast majority of respondents support ongoing maintenance of basic productivity software such as Microsoft, Adobe, and Google products. Beyond that, needs vary significantly across divisions. The survey indicated that many faculty are not aware of all of the software options available to them. In terms of hardware, 55% of all faculty (strongest majorities in BSOE and PBSci) require the use of specialized hardware or cloud computing. Of those faculty, 39% reported that in terms of research, it was either important or essential that their hardware be located on campus as opposed to an off-site data center. Across campus, 53% of faculty reported that they do not have enough space or a long-term solution for data storage (31% were not sure about capacity). More than a third of faculty are publicly sharing their data in a variety of ways, suggesting that university-wide best practices would be useful. Whereas 58% of faculty reported little need for technical support on data management in the proposal stage of research, survey results indicated that more support is needed in the implementation stage. The campus IT services most essential to faculty are wireless connectivity (94%), software licensing (94%), network bandwidth (91%), access to IT support staff (88%), and data security (82%). The lowest rates of satisfaction are with the university websites, computer hosting, high performance computing clusters, and wireless connectivity in some areas of campus but not others.

Collaboration with the Vice Chancellor for Information Technology

Following the departure of former Vice Chancellor for Information Technology (VCIT) Williams, CIT invited Interim VCIT Byron Walker to be a standing guest for a segment of each of the bi-weekly CIT meetings. During the 2022-22 year, iVCIT Walker updated the committee on many Information Technology Services (ITS) activities, including proposed IT governance committee charters and workflows, plans for moving computer hardware to the offsite colocation facility, the UCSC website redesign project, VCIT recruitment, and provisional IT governance committees.

Charters for Campus IT Governance Groups

In the spring 2022, the Academic Senate received a request to comment on the draft charter for a proposed Technologically-Enhanced Teaching and Learning Advisory Committee. Although CIT recognized the urgent need for an IT advisory committee dedicated to teaching and learning, members were concerned about the timing of establishing any new governance committees before the imminent arrival of the campus' new VCIT. CIT members would like to see incoming VCIT Aisha Jackson's input and signature on the charge of a committee that she will be executively sponsoring. Further, in its committee response[1], CIT raised concerns about the lack of specificity in the enumerated charges of said committee, and the lack of Senate representation on the proposed membership roster. Given that instruction and curriculum falls squarely within the Senate's purview of shared campus governance, any such committee should have explicit and broad Senate representation. Further, CIT noted that Chancellor Larive had recently asked that the Information and Technology Executive Steering Council be reorganized and reconstituted. The Executive Steering Council was originally designed to provide recommendations to the Chancellor, CP/EVC, and VCIT on IT strategy, investment prioritization, policies, and principles, and was designed to act as an executive funnel by which the recommendations and concerns from other IT campus committees would be directed. CIT has been informed by iVCIT Walker that the charter for this revised group is currently pending. As such, CIT raised concerns that proposing new campus IT committees with individual purviews before the charter of a new IT Executive Steering Council is established would essentially be akin to drawing the cart before the horse. CIT contends that the proposed relationship of all campus IT committees to the IT Executive Steering Council should be clearly referenced in all IT committee charters. CIT concluded its feedback by acknowledging that there may be pressing IT concerns that cannot wait for the arrival of the new VCIT, and in that case CIT recommended that a temporary ad hoc committee be convened to assess and provide appropriate recommendations in the interim.

CIT additionally provided feedback to iVCIT Walker on the draft charter for a proposed Committee on Research Computing and Data Infrastructure[2]. CIT recognized the urgent need for an IT advisory committee, but questioned the timing of the proposed establishment, and once again raised concerns about the lack of Senate representation in the membership roster, and the lack of explicit details about the roles and responsibilities of the committee, including its relationship to the IT Executive Steering Council.

UCSC Website Redesign Project

In 2017-18, CIT was informed during a consultation with ITS and University Relations staff that the UCSC main website would be undergoing a major redesign[3]. At that time, and every year since, CIT has recommended and requested that a formal request for Senate feedback be made on the proposed plans.

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[1] CIT Chair Alvaro to Senate Chair Brundage, 5/03/22, Re: Technology-Enhanced Teaching and Learning Advisory Committee

[2] CIT Chair Alvaro to iVCIT Walker, 6/17/22, Re: Draft Committee on Research Computing and Data Infrastructure Charter

[3] CIT Chair Robertson to Turner, Silva, and Knight, 1/23/17, Re: CIT Consultation on 11/15/17

In May 2021, former CIT Chair Leila Takayama made yet another request for full Senate review, this time both to then VCIT Van Williams, and Vice Chancellor of University Relations (VCUR) Mark Delos Reyes Davis.[4] The memo included explicit details regarding what the Senate would be interested in knowing/reviewing, and the appropriate process for initiating the review. Former VCIT Williams confirmed by email on May 21, 2021 that a formal review would be presented to the Senate, expected in fall of 2021.[5] A few days later, CIT received official correspondence from VCUR Davis and VCIT Williams stating that with the recent arrival of VCUR Davis and the recent hiring of a new IT Chief Experience Officer, they were in a process of reestablishing the project implementation structure and goals. The memo noted that the two divisions would seek consultation with Senate Leadership in late summer, or early fall 2021.[6]

In October 2021, in an email response to an offer from VCUR Mark David to consult with CIT and provide an informal update on the progress of the redesign project, CIT again reiterated the request and need for a full and formal Senate review. In February 2022, in response to a request from Chief Experience Officer Phyllis Treige to provide an update, CIT Chair Alvaro again reiterated the request.

A formal request for Senate feedback was ultimately received on May 11, 2022, after the standard May 1 deadline for new Senate business. The proposal was less comprehensive than CIT expected, and suggested that a significant number of decisions have already been made without any stakeholder feedback. Perhaps most notably, it appears that WordPress was chosen as the platform in 2021, despite CIT's position (stated since 2017) that a decision should not be made without Senate feedback.

Senate Chair Brundage communicated to VCUR Davis, iVCIT Walker, Chief Experience Officer Treige on May 18, 2022 requesting a delay of the development plans in order to perform a comprehensive Senate review in fall 2022. In his response, received on June 8, 2022,[7] VCUR Davis communicated that due in part to changes in leadership since the redesign project began, the scope of the project has changed significantly. In addition, the strategy for rollout has become less top-down and more incremental, with individual campus units proceeding at different paces. He favors making a fresh start at Senate consultation, dividing the website redesign project into two sub-efforts: the UCSC Gateway Website, for which the principal stakeholders are end users such as prospective students, and the Enterprise Web Service, whose principal stakeholders are content creators such as faculty. VCUR Davis proposed that the nature of Senate consultation be specifically through providing feedback on a draft survey to gather feedback from internal stakeholders, visitors to the UCSC gateway website, and website managers.

The UCSC website is the face of many areas that are within the Senate's purview such as academic programing, graduate student recruitment, outreach, program requirement, research, etc. As such,

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[4] CIT Chair Takayama to VCUR Davis and VCIT Williams, 5/13/21, Re: Senate Consultation on UCSC Website Redesign

[5] VCIT Williams to CIT Chair Takayama, 5/21/21, Re: CIT: Request for Senate Consultation - UCSC Website Redesign

[6] VCUR Davis and VCIT Williams to CIT Chair Takayama, 5/27/21, Re: Campus Website Redesign

[7] VCUR Davis to Senate Chair Brundage, 6/08/22, Re: Web Improvement Program Update

and in the spirit of shared governance, CIT reiterates that it is essential that the full Senate be consulted on the major plans associated with the project, particularly given our long history of requests for review. This is an important issue for the Senate, and as the recent ITS Priorities Survey revealed, a key concern across all UCSC faculty.

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.

CIT recognized 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, after consultation with then VCIT Van Williams, CIT wrote to Chancellor Larive and CP/EVC Kletzer to lay out the issue with associated systemwide, campus, and Gmail policies, and offered a list of possible policy/procedure solutions.[8] 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. In summer 2021, Chancellor Larive met with Senate, IT leadership, and Campus Counsel to discuss, and charged a working group to address the issue.

Regrettably, no policy proposal was submitted to the Senate for review in the 2021-22 academic year. In consultation with iVCIT Walker, CIT has learned that the working group has met and is close to finalizing its recommendations. Much of the policy effort this year was legal in nature, and iVCIT Walker has indicated that from an IT perspective, the policy should be straightforward to implement. CIT expects to see a formal request for Senate review in fall 2022.

Incoming VCIT

With the departure of the former Vice Chancellor for Information Technology Services (VCIT), Van Williams, who is now the new chief information officer for the UC system, the campus initiated a search for a new VCIT in the fall of 2021. Members of CIT actively engaged in the search process, including the service role of Prof. Yuan Ping as a member of the Search Advisory Committee (co-chaired by University Extension Dean PK Agarwal and Vice Chancellor of University Relations Mark Davis) and the service role of Prof. Jerome Fiechter as a member of the VCIT recruitment SEC subcommittee (chaired by the UCSC Academic Senate Chair David Brundage). These two members of CIT were directly involved with the search process in terms of screening top candidates, participating in group discussions during the screening process, participating in the town hall meetings and interviews with the top candidates, and submitting a report to the Chancellor with summary evaluations. On April 5, 2022, the campus announced Aisha Jackson as the incoming VCIT, who will assume office in August 2022.

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[8] CIT Chair Takayama to Chancellor Larive and CP/EVC Kletzer, 6/14/21, Re: UCSC Email Access Post Mortem

Transition to Collocation Facility for HPC computing

A transition to a colocation facility (colo) is underway to meet existing and projected demand for high performance computing (HPC) research on campus. The UCSC data center, except for equipment that logistically cannot be moved to the colocation facility, is planned to close by 2024. CIT recommends that ITS establish an ad hoc committee charged with collaborating with faculty relying on HPC for their research to establish guidelines for equipment hosted at the colocation data center as soon as possible. These guidelines should at minimum include information on (1) colocated equipment lifetime (i.e., sunsetting), (2) range and detailed cost of ITS services for installation and support of colocated equipment, and (3) expected timeline and required steps between equipment being received on campus and equipment being in production mode at the colocation facility. Clear guidance on costs and timelines will improve faculty confidence and buy-in with regard to their HPC equipment being placed in the colocation facility.

Recommendations for CIT in 2022-23

- Transition with new VCIT - Participate in Senate onboarding/shared governance.
- IT Governance Charters - Monitor - Should be linked with re-envisioned Executive Steering Committee (rosters should include Senate and faculty at large representation)
- Post Mortem Email Access - Monitor - iVCIT informed should have campus plan/policy for Senate review in near future.
- Monitor move to colo amidst survey results showing few faculty willing to give up ad hoc data storage on campus.
- Website Redesign - Monitor request for feedback on stakeholder survey.

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Respectfully submitted,

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