

**UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE  
ON  
COMPUTING AND COMMUNICATIONS**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2008-2009**

**TO THE ASSEMBLY OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE:**

The University Committee on Computing and Communications (UCCC) is charged by Senate Bylaw 155 to represent the Senate in all matters of instruction and research policy involving the use of information and communications technology and advising the president concerning the acquisition and use of information and communications technology. UCCC held two regular meetings and one teleconference during the 2008-2009 academic year. Highlights of the committee's actions are outlined below.

**Minimum Information Technology Guidelines**

UCCC continued to discuss the issue of minimum Information Technology (IT) for teaching and learning that all instructors at UC should have, a project which originated under the 2006-07 committee. Senate leadership reviewed a draft set of the guidelines and suggested that concrete information about faculty IT needs should be collected by UCCC as a first step to provide a basis for the guidelines. At its January meeting, Council approved a proposal for UCCC to implement a biennial survey to identify the issues. The results will provide a better idea of what is utilized at each campus and enable UC to make strategic decisions when funding is available to address minimum IT needs. During several meetings, the committee considered the types of questions the survey should contain and how it could be administered. The survey will be finalized and a plan for administration will be developed in the next academic year.

**Consultation with the Administration**

David Ernst, Associate Vice President for Information Resources and Communications (IR&C), served as a consultant to UCCC. The Associate Vice President provided UCCC with an update about the Information Technology Leadership Council (ITLC) which is comprised primarily of the campus chief information officers. ITLC has recently drafted a memorandum of understanding that articulates its purpose and direction and an outreach plan. The council held a planning retreat and identified a set of initiatives that can be done better if campuses collaborate. UCCC will be given an opportunity to comment on the initiatives proposed by ITLC which include creating a systemwide email system, a unified mechanism for refresh and build out of campus networking, and looking at best practices for supporting faculty with technology for teaching and learning.

UCCC learned and expressed numerous concerns to Council about the Shared Research Computing Services pilot project, a part of the larger UC Cyberinfrastructure proposal. The goal of the project is to determine how a subset of principal investigators (PIs) could be better served through a regional shared research computing facility. The project aims to provide computing capability in a shared data center that includes technical support, back up of data and access to more capacity. It proposed purchasing new computing infrastructure and funding staff at the UCSD supercomputing facility and utilizing capacity that will eventually be available at the National Energy Research Scientific Computing Center operated by the Lawrence Berkeley National Lab. UCCC questioned the budget and the rationale for the pilot. Members voiced concerns about spending \$5.6 million on a project involving only 24 faculty and questioned

whether this money could be better utilized if it was spread across the campuses to address more pressing computing and networking infrastructure needs. The committee felt that the call for proposals was not disseminated broadly enough, and that efforts to recruit additional users need to reach especially the faculty unfamiliar with the use and benefits of a supercomputing facility. A faculty/PI oversight committee is being developed and will be responsible for developing the criteria for the one-year benchmarks that will be used to determine if the pilot should continue. UCCC submitted a letter to Council outlining the concerns about the project and recommendations. Council unanimously endorsed sending UCCC's letter with the recommendations to the president. President Yudof replied, rejecting UCCC's advice not to go forward with this program.

The administration also kept the committee abreast of other IR&C efforts. The Institutional Research unit is working with IR&C on the development of a systemwide data warehouse. Many operational transactional systems will feed into the warehouse automatically, with a goal of reducing the requests to campuses for data used for various reports. Another new project is mainframe consolidation. Campuses that do not want to operate mainframes for administrative computing will have them transferred into the Kaiser mainframe facility. Finally, planning is underway for a new human resource payroll project. Currently eleven different systems are used by UC. It is believed that by using established best business practices, UC will be able to devote more resources to support teaching, learning and research. UCCC will monitor the progress of ITLC and IR&C initiatives and projects.

### **Textbook Affordability**

The issue of textbook affordability was brought to UCCC for consideration by the Academic Senate Vice Chair and the Student Regent. In recent years, textbook prices have risen much faster than the average rate of inflation. One reason for these price increases is the large number of extras included with modern textbooks such as CD-ROMs and instructional supplements that are usually web-based. Customization makes it very difficult for students to buy and sell in the used-book market. Recent pieces of state legislation attempt to address this issue through a number of strategies, including encouraging faculty to give consideration to the least costly practices in assigning textbooks and by requiring publishers to make information about the cost of the textbooks more available. UCCC members suggested several approaches to increase affordability including purchasing the international editions of textbooks online. Another idea is for the California Digital Library to commission textbooks from UC faculty for large introductory courses that could be free and online for UC students. UCCC will follow UC's efforts to address this matter.

### **Google Email**

The committee talked about the contract UC has signed with Google to provide Gmail email services at several campuses. Davis is the first campus where this is being rolled out, and Santa Cruz is planning to start using Gmail for students in fall 2009. Google is not charging students anything and students will have expanded data storage space, more features and access to popular communication tools. The contract stipulates that Google does not own the content of the emails, will never have a legal interest in anything students send or receive, and will never claim copyright or use. The content will not be analyzed so students will not receive advertisements. The University will not share personally identifiable confidential information with Google or any other third parties. UCCC is concerned that the seven year contract can be

terminated by Google with six months notice and by UC with one month notice. This is problematic because the emails are stored in Google's proprietary format on its servers. Google will never share its software for reading the email and Google has not promised to send the email back in a format that can be used. Additional concerns are related to Google's compliance with subpoenas and confidentiality issues related to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability acts. A final concern is about the security of the information, including the potential access to a server by Google staff based outside the United States.

### **UC Seminar Network**

UCCC was asked by the University Committee on Research Policy (UCORP) to review and comment on its concept paper, "Towards Greater UC Synergy." The objective of the proposal is to record and broadcast lectures which are shared across the campuses. Members noted that the concept paper focuses heavily on the sciences and that other areas could benefit from the model. This and several other concerns, including uncertainty about the costs of this proposal, were shared with UCORP.

### **Additional Business**

UCCC devoted part of each regular meeting to reports on issues facing local committees. Discussions included UC's budget, online collaboration tools, online homework systems, computing space, financial aid for student technology, and the use of technology in different disciplines.

### **Reports and Recommendations**

UCCC communicated with the Academic Council on the following:

- Shared Research Computing Project
- Draft furlough and salary cut guidelines

### **Representation**

The UCCC Chair, Lisa Naugle, served as a faculty representative to the Information Technology Leadership Council and as an *ex officio* member of the University Committee on Library and Scholarly Communications.

### **Acknowledgements**

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Respectfully submitted,

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