

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA ACADEMIC SENATE
UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON COMPUTING AND COMMUNICATIONS
TELECONFERENCE MINUTES
April 18, 2012

Attending: Joel Primack, Chair (UCSC), Felix Wu, Vice Chair (UCD), Sreenivas Jammalamadaka (UCSB), Anthony Joseph (UCB), Maurizio Forte (UCM), Gregory Beran (UCR), Shahrokh Yadegari (UCSD), Martha Winnacker (Executive Director, Academic Senate), Brenda Abrams (Policy Analyst)

I. Announcements

Chair Primack announced that David Ernst will not join the meeting today and did not send a representative from IR&C. In addition to discussing whether UCCC should continue, the committee will discuss the UC Collaborative Infrastructure deliverables and the proposal for Cyberinfrastructure and Research Technology. Although in February UCCC discussed whether the committee should continue, Chair Primack did not think the discussion was adequate or that there was consensus. The committee should discuss what a new charter would say. Shelton Waggener is leaving UCB and will be replaced by Mary Doyle from UCSC on Information Technology Leadership Council.

II. Consent Calendar

Action: The minutes were approved.

III. UC Collaborative Infrastructure and Cyberinfrastructure and Research Technology

Chair Primack reminded the committee about UCCC's criticism of the Shared Research Computing Project. Following the ShaRCS project, a condominium model was proposed but only two of the campuses thought this was a good idea. An alternative UC cyberinfrastructure is being proposed. Each campus can do what it would like and the cyberinfrastructure will provide tools that can be shared. Departments should be asked about their level of interest in this new proposal. New users need adequate support to learn exactly how to use the system and this is not included in the plan. The changing architecture of high performance computing systems is making it very difficult to use old techniques for programming them efficiently, and new techniques and people trained to use these systems are needed. The rate at which modern instruments and computers are producing data is increasing geometrically but the bandwidth for transmission of the data over the internet is increasing only arithmetically, which is inadequate. Chair Primack invited members to comment on the proposals.

Discussion: Questions include whether the cyberinfrastructure is going to remain cutting edge and whether it will remain cost competitive for faculty. The storage that will be provided needs to be described. There is no explanation about how the plan was developed. Vice President Ernst's office seems to deal mainly with other administrators whereas the users are primarily faculty, students, and post doctoral researchers. UCOP needs to have a better channel of communication with faculty because decisions the administration make do not address what faculty really need. More faculty need to be brought into high performance computing. Instead of trying to build a standardized condo model, UC could use the funds for extensive technical support. Another question is how UCOP is addressing all of the issues encountered with the ShaRCS project.

IV. UC Technology Acquisition Support Group

The proposal for reframing the Technology Acquisition Support Group was distributed to the ITLC. This is part of an effort to coordinate and streamline across the system, and this started with the personnel

system. Instead of each campus making deals with vendors, to the extent possible these should be across the system. UCB CIO Waggener tried to do this with Microsoft and Adobe.

Discussion: Given the number of Microsoft and Adobe users, the bulk license makes sense. However, open source software alternatives have not been explored. The companies recognize that if UC uses these tools it will be locked in when the time comes to renegotiate the contracts. The productivity suite solutions were driven by staff and open sources solutions were not considered because staff need very complex macro support which is not available in open versions of software. A large number of users are shifting from Windows to Macs so purchasing Windows licenses for everyone is inflating the cost of those licenses. There should have been a discussion about the shift by students and faculty to Macs. There is a risk of being locked into a highly proprietary platform and in a few years the vendor could dramatically increase the price, resulting in huge migration costs to another platform or just paying the increase. UCSC has bought into the entire Google package for students, faculty and staff. It is not clear in the proposal what the cost of a systemwide help desk will be. For many of the shared services, the chancellors will pay for the first year. It would be more cost effective for UC to negotiate bulk contracts to pay a flat rate for long distance calls instead of billing individual faculty. At a certain point plans can be so inexpensive that the cost recovery exceeds the cost of the calls.

V. Consultation with the Office of the President

There was no consultation with the Office of the President.

VI. The Future of UCCC

Chair Primack would like to discuss Chair Anderson's letter regarding abolishing UCCC. There has been poor attendance and some of the campuses have not appointed representatives. The committee has not been as active as other Senate committees. If members think that the committee should continue, should the charge be revised? If the committee should not continue, how should the committee's functions be distributed to other Senate committees? Only one member of the committee has expressed the opinion that the committee should be disbanded while several others expressed the strong view that the committee should be continued with a revised charge.

Discussion: One member stated that it is important for faculty to provide input on things such as shared resources. Another member indicated it is difficult to understand how faculty can provide input at their campuses. Continuing the committee may depend on how active UCCC can be. It is the perception of one member that decisions are made from the top down. Chair Primack indicated that UCCC could have a blog where people can raise issues at any time, although this can become a drain on people's time. A member reported using a closed group on Facebook to conduct communication about his research. Some members think that the listserv is not useful.

The committee plays an important role. One member learns more through UCCC than through his campus chief information officer. There needs to be a way for administrators to tell faculty what is happening. The failure of some campuses to appoint members is irrelevant. The committee should explore ways to be more proactive. The role of the committee within ITLC should be elevated and this would make UCCC seem more relevant. The vice chair of UCCC should be on the ITLC mailing list and invited to the council's meetings, and it would be good for UCCC's chair and vice chair to have voting rights. Chair Primack indicated that Vice President Ernst seems to report to ITLC decisions that have already been made. Executive Director Winnacker stated that the faculty may never have input on administrative computing needs. If UCCC can identify principles for choosing the kind of computing issues that are Senate issues and for which systemwide decisions are made. Before decisions are made or announced, UCCC should be consulted. The revised charge could state that UCCC will be consulted before and in the

process of developing new plans, and not presented with plans that cannot be changed in response to UCCC's suggestions. Chair Primack is willing to work with vice chair Felix Wu and former chair Anthony Joseph on a revised charge.

VII. Member Items: Major Campus or Systemwide Issues

There were no member items.

Meeting adjourned at: 3 PM

Minutes prepared by: Brenda Abrams

Attest: Joel Primack