Information Technology Policy Committee, 2005-2006 Annual Report

In September 2005 a summary of default settings for student email accounts was presented. The default setting was set to filter the most spam possible. It was thought by IMT that most students do not adjust the filter level for some time, which is a burden to account sizes which must be stored.

The meeting schedule for the committee was altered from last year’s meeting times to accommodate meeting with the Provost in November. The November meeting sets direction for the committee in the middle of the year and is an important milestone for the committee. In the prior year there had been a conflict with an important monthly meeting that the Provost attended in Madison.

The September meeting also contained a briefing on server replacement and a presentation on campus computer security and how they are funded. In addition there was a presentation on needed computer upgrades for IMT.

A presentation was made by the Collaboration Suite Team, a Core Team, of IMT headed by Prof. Jacques Du Plessis. The committee advised that a new Collaboration software suite would benefit the Campus with better spam filtering and instant messaging, which students indicated they wanted.

Bruce Maas, interim CIO of IMT, began a “Committee Chairs” monthly meeting with the ITPC Chair, the University Committee Chair and the Academic Staff Committee Chair to help limit how many briefings on IMT plans had to be made each month.

The October meeting was focused on drafting questions for the Provost’s visit to the Committee at its November meeting. I reviewed the ITPC Charter for the committee.

Steve Brukbacher, head of computer security for IMT, reviewed aspects of campus security. We have about 6,000 active computer ports on Campus. One of the continual problems which has to be responded to is that the Campus gets about ten complaints a day at the beginning of a semester from the Music Recording Industry which trickles down to about two complaints a day by the end of a semester.

The November meeting began with an announcement about the Milwaukee Wireless Initiative, a project between the City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee Fiber. The main topic of the meeting in November was the visit by Provost Rita Cheng to respond to the eight questions posed in October. The main topics discussed were: the training and reorganization of IMT; IT resources and the growth of IMT; IT security issues; progress on the “wide use” approach to technology; progress on the search for a Dean for Continuing Education and this person’s role in Distance Education; standardized faculty annual reports that can form an IT data base; and what the potential IT impacts of important University of Wisconsin System issues are.
Bruce Maas and Chair Stephen Pevnick were invited by the Graduate Research Council to answer questions on computing and graduate student research.

The February meeting saw a discussion of eliminating the modem pool presented by Bruce Maas. The committee advised that it should not be eliminated all at once as there are still faculty users that depend on this service. A gradual reduction was advised. IMT also presented their rationale for subscribing to Gartner Research Services, a subscription consulting service for academic computing environments. This service would compliment Educause which provides information on information technology in higher education. The issue of central software shortfall was presented. The Administration indicated that they will no longer pay for Campus software shortfalls. Steve Brukbacher talked to the committee about desktop security practice standards. Also the recommendation for the dismantling of the IMT Television Studio was discussed.

The Chairman of ITPC and some members of the ITPC attended a lunch with University of Wisconsin System Vice President Ed Meachen. The working topics, of the year thus far, of the ITPC were informally presented and the committee was allowed to ask brief questions about University of Wisconsin System policy.

The March meeting saw a continued discussion of the phasing out of the modem pool. Also a continued presentation on desktop computer security standards was made. The formation of the On Line Program Council was announced by the Administration. The charter was reviewed. The body of the committee will be formed by individuals designated by their Academic Deans. Also at the meeting IMT presented its budget forecasts.

In the April meeting a request was made for a second volunteer to serve on the Educational Technology committee with Chair Stephen Pevnick. Ed Mabury volunteered for the membership in the committee. Also at the beginning of the April meeting Laura Pedrick said that the search for the new CIO of IMT position was going to be delayed, but that the ITPC would have representation on that committee when it is formed.

The feature presentation of the April meeting was by Professor Sandra Braman of the UWM Communications Department and Fellow of Educause Center for Applied Research. The presentation centered around the idea that the way we conduct and present research has changed, integrating computing more thoroughly that ever before. Her presentation was extremely interesting and relevant to all of the faculty members of the committee.

Laura Pedrick mentioned that “croquet” software was the edge of a new paradigm for researchers. Jim Decker said that using Panther File instead of email attachments would make storage more efficient, enabling more computer storage capacity. Bruce Maas said there is not recent history of IMT working with faculty researchers. Sandra Bauman recommended that Departments put up money for a faculty’s development in research before hiring new faculty. She recommended looking at an example of a professional development software called Igrid 2005.org to see the state of the art in natural sciences.
and humanities software. The April meeting with Professor Braman’s presentation was the most stimulating of the year.

Generally, at the May meeting the ITPC elects a Chair for the coming year. However, no members continuing on the committee in the 2006-07 academic year wanted to run, so the election was postponed until September 2006.

Laura Pedrick announced that the search for CIO position will begin in August so that candidates can be brought in during the fall semester. Alan Aycock reported that there are a number of podcast initiatives going on around campus. Bruce Maas said that IMT will provide the $50,000 seed money to start the Apple Store in the University Book Store. He mentioned that Apple Computers could run Mac OS10, Windows and Unix operating systems. Ruth Williams, the Co Chair of the Educational Technology Committee came to the May ITPC meeting, but Ed Tech Committee had not made its final decisions as yet. Denise Babin gave a little background on the UWM Libraries' proposals. Leonard Parker expressed interest in seeing a chart of how these funds fit into I&MT's budget. Bruce Maas explained that these funds are the main support for the campus computer labs and the help desk. He estimated that these funds represent perhaps 10% of I&MT's budget.

Ed Mabry moved that the campus establish “best practices” for notifying people of changes in campus IT systems, such as PantherList and the modem pool. This discussion was tabled until September. Ed Mabry recommended that the LTC be elevated and recast as a Center for Academic Computing (CAC) as both a service and intellectual center that could coordinate activities and information and undertake research into “best practices.” Alan Aycock inquired as to whether the CAC would be a production organization undertaking such tasks as translating diagrams into Powerpoint for a poster session. Laura Pedrick expressed the Provost's concern about potentially diluting the impact and focus of the LTC.

Leonard Parker expressed frustration with the current PantherMail. Bruce Maas agreed that the current email system is a least common denominator. That is why a Core Service Team led by Prof. Jacques Du Plessis is investigating the purchase of a new email and collaboration system. The decision process will have open meetings in the fall to consider the various alternatives.

Submitted by:
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