

Committee on Academic Computing and Telecommunications
Final Report

2003-2004

Accomplishments

The full committee met three times during the academic year to consider ACTC charges from SenEx. In addition, the committee chair engaged in numerous data gathering discussions with representatives of the KU Academic Computing community. Donna Liss served as Provost's representative.

The list of charges to this years committee was extensive. The standing charges were addressed in general discussions with the Provost's representative and various members of the KU community at the meetings. The specific charges that were addressed at length at the meetings focused on security issues, wireless technology policy and implementation, web access (Portal issues), on-line registration, the Digital Library, software licensing, and the scope of technology services in general.

One important item that is not well documented here is that Donna Liss laid out a detailed plan to change the organizational structure of the various components of the Information Services of the University. This includes a restructuring of the management system of the computer center from a 'silo' structure (fast response/focused groups) to a structure where information sharing was emphasized. The library information systems and other information systems groups within the University were also affected. Some of these changes are addressed in attached reports by the Office of the Provost.

The three full meetings featured presentations and discussions led by campus experts in their respective fields. Meeting minutes are attached.

November 19, 2003 - network security and wireless issues

Chuck Crawford
Jenny Mehmedovic

March 10, 2004 - wireless policy and implementation

Donna Liss

March 17, 2004 - web Portal and digital library

Julie Cotes
Richard Fyffe
Deb Ludwig

In addition, external discussions were held and formal and informal reports were made by Donna Liss, Bob Turvey (on-line registration), and Bob Basow (wireless, software licensing). Short reports of some of this activity are attached.

The following are short summaries of major points made in each of the sub-areas discussed:

Network Security

Network security continues to be a primary issue. Implementation of the security policy seems to be moving along well, with training of over 100 liaison personnel and an overall sense of elevated security awareness campus-wide. New authentication policies are being implemented. Although obvious occasional problems still occur, things seem to be moving forward. New spam-related policies seem to be helping, somewhat. Availability and awareness of antivirus solutions seems to be helping greatly. Support for non-Windows platforms also seems to have improved.

Wireless technology

Wireless technology is the hottest issue in the ACTC realm by far. A new policy has gone into effect. It was discussed extensively during our meetings (see minutes). Basically, the technology is spreading slowly on campus, as of yet, with the main access point still at the Kansas Union. There are, however, several other 'hot spots' on campus. Some of the most sophisticated installations (i.e. in Architecture) are not officially approved under the new policy. There also seems to still be a great deal of mistrust in discussions between administrators and faculty, staff, and students concerning the implementation of the technology. One point of concern centers around purchase and installation of router hardware. Specifically, while everyone seems to understand the need for standardization, there seems to be concern over excessive controls on what equipment can be purchased and vendor control (i.e. centralized purchasing control is a sore point). Also, the security versus accessibility issue seems to be a central theme in some of the more heated discussions on campus. Open communications and access to training and information seem to be the real core issues, overall.

Online Registration

The online registration system seems to be working, but there appear to be seven flaws that have been recognized. An e-mail from Bob Turvey is attached which elucidates this issue.

The Digital Library Initiative is described in some detail in the minutes of our third meeting. There are basically three components to the system, a cross-database search engine (really the electronic replacement for a catalog), a citation system, also for accessing third party materials, and finally, a fairly ambitious set of features to enhance access to locally generated digital information.

Software Licensing

Campus wide licensing of major software packages is becoming more and more of an issue, with cross-disciplinary projects becoming more common. There is an office at the computer center that is now in charge of some of this activity. There have been some problems with the implementation of this system, however. There have been complaints of delays, and an overall lack of information concerning the use of the process at this point. The fact that there is such an office is a positive step, however.

ACTC Committee

Minutes

11/19/03

In attendance:
Chuck Crawford
Jenny Mehmedovic
Jerree Catlin
Bill Comer
Susan Zvacek
Sue Hewitt
Paul Johnson
Bill Carswell
Ryan Faulconer
Bob Basow
Paul Atchley
Ross Black

Jenny Mehmedovic and Chuck Crawford from ITS were in attendance to speak to us about network security policy and implementation.

They explained that in terms of overall flexibility there were no changes in policy concerning security issues. In terms of implementation the training program was well on its way to implementation with almost all (111 total) tech liaisons registered. The technical liaison best practices training loop was now in place. Training at the Dean, Chair, and Director levels was to be implemented in December. Jenny said the Security Awareness Initiative was going to Departments with the message the IT Security Office and liaisons couldn't do it all.

Chuck emphasized that there was a concerted effort to expedite technical response for Windows exploits and expedite training of tech liaisons. He said that they had changed communications mechanisms with liaisons and established a list server for this communication.

It was discussed that the network administrators group KUNA was a grassroots effort and that the administrators were trying to make it more official. It was mentioned that tech

ACTC Minutes for March 10, 2004

Chair Ross Black called the meeting to order at 2:00 in 118 Lindley Hall. Attending were Paul Johnson, Bill Carswell, Sue Hewitt, Becky Schulte, Thelma Simons, Donna Liss, Bob Basow and Arthur Jones (student).

The committee approved the minutes of our 11/19/03 meeting.

Bob Basow opened by introducing a one page report on his meeting with Donna Liss on features of the wireless policy and implementation scheme that had specifically been raised in the last ACTC meeting. The report was accepted.

Donna Liss reported on the KU wireless policy and its implementation plan. Johnson asked for clarification on the security issues, e.g. why is wireless access more vulnerable than wired access. Carswell asked about the cost structure. Liss explained the encryption and authentication system that will be used with the Cisco-certified hubs supplied solely by NTS for approximately \$800. Johnson requested that the NTS specify brand names and models for compatibility, but that they not require that the units be purchased from the University. Jones commented that Student Senate is preparing a list of priority areas that students feel should be equipped first with wireless access.

Liss shared a document outlining plans for the Research Computing Program Review. She asked committee members what role they feel that ACTC should play in the review process. Black commented that ACTC would welcome the opportunity to participate by being interviewed by the consulting firm. Carswell asked for an explanation on how the consulting firm will actually conduct the review.

Liss explained that there are undergoing a major refocus of services at IS. There is now an internal service review ongoing for IT. The Library system restructuring report will be finished in June. Now Academic Computing Services (ACS) is restructuring its organization to better serve the University community. The management structure is moving from a vertical 'silo' architecture to a more planar architecture. The silo structure emphasizes fast response once the user finds the contact they need, whereas the planar structure emphasizes communication and shared information. Carswell emphasized that the new structure should be service and information oriented, and should not just be grabbing old pieces of the system and reattaching them. Basow suggested that

ACTC Minutes for March 17, 2004

Chair Ross Black called the meeting to order at 2:30 in 118 Lindley Hall. Attending were Bob Basow, Julie Loats, Bill Comer, Sue Hewitt, Becky Schulte, and Thelma Simons. Richard Fyffe and Deb Ludwig also attended the second half of the meeting.

The committee approved the minutes of our 4/10/04 meeting.

Julie Loats gave a detailed presentation on the history and status of the KU Web Portal. She noted that the prototype of the portal was established in fall of 2002 as a single point of authentication where many University web services could be easily accessed. The original Portal was a student portal designed after discussions with the Student Senate, the Registrar, the Office of Student Success, and two Open Forums at the Kansas Union. Several other portal models were studied before the prototype was shared in the Open Forums.

She noted that the current version of the Portal still emphasizes services for students, but that there were six individual 'layouts' for different combinations of users that could be customized and personalized. These include layouts for faculty, staff, and students, a layout for students who are also staff, a layout for faculty/student interaction for classes, and an affiliate layout.

Although many of the services on the Portal are available elsewhere on the web, it is designed to present 'channels' or services in a simpler, more easily accessible format than more detailed web pages. The individual channels include a search engine, e-mail, notepad, bookmarks, and a briefcase. Services available include access to enrollment information, course schedules, grades, the timetable, ARTS forms, etc. Financial services are also accessible, including KU Card accounts and financial aid information. Library services are also accessible.

Coming enhancements include Faculty/Staff employee information, a Student Campus Life feature, an NTS feature, and access to Health Services. Certain target student populations are also being featured.

Richard Fyffe and Deb Ludwig then made a short presentation and led a discussion of the Digital Library Initiative. Fyffe explained the policy and technical structure of the

Bill Comer then engaged Fyffe in a discussion of the publication status and licensing of materials submitted to Scholarworks. Fyffe explained that the author retained the copyright and had full control over the process.

Scholarworks is to be released soon, but will be run on a test server before the Pilot version is released 'live'. Fyffe explained that they were visualizing the system as a self-service depository, with a table of formats, and a help service to lend a hand to submitting authors.

A Short Report to R.A. Black of the ACTC
on the Current Status of Online Enrollment from Bob Turvey
Spring 2004

We have a new enrollment PowerPoint in development. A really talented person from the Library staff is working on it. We have details of how you do enrollment but it is a list approach and it seems to be unused.

The five issues (no particular order) are:

1. I can not get signed on.
2. I hate the extensive navigations to get to the place I want to go.
3. The class shows as open but when I add it, it tells me it is closed.
4. I enrolled in a 500 -699 level class and it tells me I am in the wrong career—what does that mean?
5. It is slow.
6. From the faculty side—grade entry is too slow.
7. From the faculty and advisor side—I can not see what the student sees so how can I help?

1. Problems related to security settings or software versions on student's computer. Bad time or time zone set up on student's computer. Student does not have Online ID.

2. We have not been able to defeat the problem. The navigations are redundant and long but inherent in the software used for the Self Service features. I think it will be some time before we can do anything about this issues as the solution needs to come from PeopleSoft.

3. This occurs for "combined section" courses. We believe there is a fix coming from PeopleSoft for this. The system is always accurate. That is if the student gets an error message stating that the class is full instead of a success message at enrollment, the class is most definitely closed. This is perplexing since the student or anyone reviewing the Schedule of Classes would not be able to tell that the class is actually closed. We anticipate a solution before October enrollment.

4. 500-699 level courses have to be divided by the graduate and undergraduate

6. The larger the class, the slower the process. We are looking at options but so far have not identified a good way to accept input from a spreadsheet or directly from Blackboard as we had desired. The Registrar plans to offer to hand enter grades for large classes. Large is not defined as yet but probably is over 600 or so. Eventually we will get this solved but it is not as simple as it appears. As an aside, in the past grade entry included the cost of the grade sheets, the organization, printing, distribution and the collection of them. It also meant that faculty had to obtain and then deliver the copy to the department and most of them brought the copy to the Registrar's Office. Add all that time up and I would guess that this is one process that is saving significant time and money for all but the large classes. Admittedly those faculty who used multiple graduate assistants to assist in the process may find some disadvantages or need for a new process at their end.

7. Due to security, to see what the student sees, you have to be the student and we can not allow that since it gives you the ability to act as the student. We have not found a good way to allow advisors to review precisely what the student is seeing.

-----Original Message-----

From: Black, Ross A
Sent: Tuesday, March 02, 2004 3:09 PM
To: Turvey, Robert D
Subject: RE: UACC --March 18

Hi Bob,

The 18th sounds ok. I have 2:30 open for the UACC meeting then. It might be good to

get together before that, though, if you have time. Something easier that might help me

Thanks.

Ross Black

ACTC

Geology

black@ku.edu

-----Original Message-----
From: Turvey, Robert D
Sent: Tue 3/2/2004 2:27 PM
To: Black, Ross A
Cc:
Subject: UACC --March 18

Report by Bob Basow on meeting with Donna Liss

I met on Friday, 3/5, with Donna Liss, Associate Vice Provost, to discuss the Wireless Local Area Network Systems Policy. This provides a summary of some key points that may be helpful in communicating about the new Information Services Policy and fee structure.

The key benefit to wireless coverage will be the ability to establish collaborative learning spaces where students can connect to networks via portable computers (e.g. laptops, Pocket PCs.) However, a Wireless Local Area Network (WLAN) will not replace the need for a wired network, any more than cell phones have replaced the need for land-lines.

COVERAGE

Wireless coverage patterns depend on the environment -- e. g. thickness of walls, placement of the transmitter. Each transmitter can support multiple users, but as the number of users increases, the response decreases. NTS will assist the academic units preparing to go wireless in determining their needs.

CONTROL

Compared to wired networks, wireless networks pose greater security risks. Thus, the policy requires that no WLAN may be placed into operation without consultation and registration with NTS. Additionally, all WLAN access points must be procured through NTS. NTS will coordinate the installation and configuration configuration of all WLAN systems and will help resolve frequency coordination problems.

COST

The current fee of \$6/month per port provides for network connection and security. In addition, each wireless access point will be charged an additional \$15/month fee for the central wireless authentication and encryption system.

**Research Computing Program Review
for the University of Kansas**

**DRAFT
Feb 2, 2004**

The University of Kansas Center for Research (KUCR) has recently completed internal and external reviews to assess the successes and challenges facing the campus research enterprise. As a result of these reviews, KUCR identified several key objectives:

- 1) Sharpen its customer service and provided consistent information to researchers and staff;
- 2) Seek additional space for the growing number of research projects; and
- 3) Increase internal and external communication about campus research projects, policies, and direction.

In support of KUCR's new objectives, Information Services believes that now is the opportune time to assess the effectiveness of the technical services provided to campus researchers, and to evaluate the relationship between research computing and the KU Center for Research. To this end, we wish to commission an external review of our Information Services research computing profile to address the following issues.

General Purpose Research Computing Environment –

- Is the current general purpose research computing environment capable of meeting the needs of the general research community? (This includes our general purpose hardware and software available to all researchers on campus, data storage capabilities, as well as videoconferencing facilities.)

High Performance Computing –

- How effective is the high performance computing partnership for University researchers, and, is it still an appropriate activity for KU to be engaged in?
- Does Information Services facilitate access by KU researchers to national and international high-performance research and education networks?

Access –

- Is the campus network infrastructure appropriate to support research activities?
- Is networking support available in all areas where actual research is conducted, including research in the field?

- **Are there needs for technology services that are not being fulfilled by either Information Services or KUCR?**