

Final Report, Academic Computing and Telecommunications Committee, 2001-2002

The ACTC committee dealt with many of the 11 (Section I.) charges during the course of the year. The committee did not get to others (Section II). It also discussed several other issues (Section III). It was not possible to meet the entire committee during the year, and sub-committees discussed the items; the meeting notes were then circulated.

I. Response to Charges

1. *Charge 2: Provide faculty, student and staff input for the strategic initiatives . . .*
Selected strategic initiatives were discussed as follows:

- a. *Initiative #3: Local technical support jump-start.* This is a pilot program in which combined CLAS and ACS funding is used to provide support for under-served units (particularly the Humanities.) It fits within the “Local Support Model” previously endorsed by the committee by having individuals assigned to units; the technical support pool backs up these individuals. Longer-term concerns arise from the facts that this pilot has only one more year with uncertain funding thereafter and that hardware support and software support are handled out of separate offices.
- b. *Initiative #4: Security audit for campus servers.* Unix computers and NT servers can be audited by request. However, specific policy is not yet complete on either how to respond to the presence of compromised computers or how to assure that server-level computers are secure. The current policy is under revision.
- c. *Initiative #7: Maintain student computer labs.* The KU campus has a mix of labs maintained by departments and labs maintained by the ACS. A suggestion was made that a method for coordination could be useful – information about innovations and standard procedures available in the ACS-supported labs needs to be communicated to the administrators of other labs.
- d. *Initiative #9: High performance networking and computing.* The committee understands that the new Associate Vice Chancellor for Information Services will be asked to address planning early after arrival on campus.
- e. *Initiative #11: Implement Web-based training.* The ACTC has discussed the need for access to training for students and staff for several years. The ACS has contracted with SmartForce for access to training hosted on their site. Difficulties with user validation are being solved, and a “silent rollout” of 100 titles is planned followed by an announcement to faculty this summer. It should be possible for faculty to refer students to on-line training in Fall, 2002, if they do not possess the necessary skills for a class. In addition, ACS is arranging for third-party MOUS (Microsoft Office User Support) certification testing.

f. *Initiative #24: Develop Digital Library Infrastructure and Services.* The committee is at the stage of evaluating two vendors. A base system should be implemented by Spring Semester, 2003.

2. RE: Charge #7, review the new Exchange/Outlook email. Committee members expressed satisfaction with Exchange/Outlook, noting in particular the value of virus checking. The voluntary procedure for staff switchover still seems appropriate. Responses to the major incidents of the past year appear to have been appropriate. An upgrade is planned for this summer.

Email services for new hires have remained a problem. At a time when email and on-line services are considered mission-critical, new faculty and staff are unable to receive services for about two weeks due to database-population conflicts. A temporary manual procedure has been implemented in which requests are approved by Jenny Mehmedovic and passed on to Computer Center staff. A permanent solution is required, and a committee is working on that. The temporary procedures need to be communicated to the units on campus.

3. RE: Charge #9, *NTS policies and practices . . .* The committee discussed the status of NTS networking activities which fall into two categories: (1) maintenance and evolutionary enhancement of existing infrastructure and (2) implementation of new technologies.

The first is clearly related to the funding model since heretofore there has not been a coherent plan for bringing networking infrastructure to the end user and enhancing that infrastructure. The proposed model calls for a monthly charge per circuit that will pay for current service and appropriate upgrades. Re-allocation of funds are to guarantee that if a unit makes no changes in services, the net cost will not increase; however, additional connections will result in new charges.

Regarding the second, NTS finds itself limited by personnel. Implementation of multi-casting, video, voice over IP, conferencing, etc. will be slowed.

NTS is currently planning to investigate 3-G (cellular) technology for campus-wide wireless digital access rather than 802.11b. Again, implementation will be limited by personnel shortages.

A proposed policy on near-term implementation of 802.11b in specialized areas is currently under review and not yet available.

4. RE: Charge #10, *local computer support.* This was discussed in part under 1a, above. The committee awaits the results of a survey of the level of local support, but a level of commitment to the "local support model" advocated by the ACTC in 2000 seems apparent. The goal should be (1) to have *at least* a support person per 100 desktop computers and (2) to have each support person assigned to a group of users (not dispatched from a pool) so that each user knows the name of the support person. The next ACTC should look closely at that survey and monitor progress toward the goal.

5. *RE: Charge #11, policy framework to guide the use of University Information Technology Resources.* The draft policies were reviewed together with a representative from the VC-IS office, and several changes were requested.

One such change is a policy on computer sites that appear to be compromised and are staging events such as Denial-of-Service attacks, spam sourcing, or virus/worm attacks. Under what conditions may the University “pull the plug?”

A policy on wireless access nodes will also be necessary.

II. Charges Not Discussed

1. *Charges #3, 4;* we did not get to these.
2. *Charge #6 RE: off-campus access accounts.* The system appears to be working appropriately.
3. *Charge #8 RE: KanRen* The system appears to be working appropriately.

III. Additional Items

1. There was discussion about mobility problems on campus. Setup for the Internet when moving from building to building (*i.e.*, getting an IP number) remains a problem. KU does not have a campus-wide DHCP system to automate IP number assignment, so it is difficult to move from building to building with one’s laptop and have access to the Internet. The DHCP solution that was purchased several years ago was not implemented, reportedly due to personnel shortages, and a new system is in development. Its implementation is essential to seamless access to the Internet.

The second item is actual connectivity. Circuit connections are substantially available across campus, including media classrooms. Wireless technology is an alternative, though not near term. Choices and rates of implementation in these technologies will have major impact.

2. The committee discussed the problem of having media classrooms across campus without computers but not equipping the teachers in those rooms with laptop computers.

The need for faculty to have appropriate computing tools was expressed. Teachers in media classrooms without computers need tools as mentioned above. It is also difficult for faculty in several areas to obtain desktop computers. The feasibility of a procedure for sharing used computers might be investigated.

3. A significant area to be monitored in the future is the entire subject of security. One of the components is authentication for access not only to restricted information but also to the network backbone and Internet itself.

It would be useful to monitor the types of security that are implemented in order to assure that they are no more intrusive and restrictive than necessary.

4. Recruitment of the future Associate Vice-Chancellor for Information Services. The chair served on the recruitment committee, and several committee members spent time with one or more candidates, thereby helping in recruitment and evaluation.
5. Future constitution of the ACTC. This committee has grown over the past few years with the addition of a number of *ex-officio* members. Valued participants, in addition to faculty and student members, include the Director(s) of Academic Computing, the Assistant Vice-Chancellor and Director of NTS, the Associate Director of NTS, the Director of IDS, and an assistant to the Vice Chancellor for Information Services. A group this size is impossible to schedule.

The subject matter has also broadened, including, for example, Intellectual Property.

Consideration should be given to breaking this committee into at least two committees and distributing the load appropriately. For example, Charges 3 and 4 seem distinct from the others.

April 30, 2002

Chair: **Kenneth Ratzlaff**, Chemistry (2002); Council rep: **Al Lata**, Chemistry (2002); **Nancy Baym**, Communication Studies, (2004); **Jeremiah James**, EECS, (2004); **Paul Atchley**, Psychology, (2004); **Satya Mandal**, Math (2003); **John Charnes**, Business (2003); **Steve McCabe**, Civil Engineering (2003); **Ed Meyen**, Special Education, (2002); **Haskell Springer** (fall semester), English, (2002); **Eric Braun**, student; **Kevin Carr**, Student; **Kyle Johnson**, student; **James Neu**, student.

Ex-officio members participating: **Jerree Catlin**, Acting co-director of ACS; **Wes Hubert**, Acting co-director of ACS; **Bill Klein**, Associate Director, NTS; **John Louis**, Assistant Vice-Chancellor and Director of NTS; **Jenny Mehmedovic**, assistant to the Vice Chancellor for Information Services; **Susan Zvacek**, director of IDS.