

Minutes of Meeting November 5th, 2009

Approved December 3, 2009

Final

Committee Attendees: Austin, Jansma, Lew, Liggett (Chair), Loehner, Mamer, Smallberg, Snyder, Steen, Walker. Guests: AVC Jim Davis

1. Quick topics

- a. Minutes from October meeting approved with no edits.
- b. Introduction of new FCET member Lisa Snyder. Lisa will be joining FCET as a liaison to the Jim Davis' Office of Information Technology (OIT). Lisa is currently part-time with the School of Arts and Architecture and part-time with OIT. Her interest is in interactive computer models and architectural history.
- c. Briefing on A.I.M.E complaint received about Video Furnace. The Association for Information Media and Equipment is a trade organization which feels that UCLA's digital video reserves service via Video Furnace is a violation of copyright. With assistance from campus counsel OIT responded that we felt that digitizing videos for use via course websites was permitted under the face-to-face copyright exemption which permits displays in a classroom or similar place devoted to instruction. We also stated that the copying is permitted under the Fair Use exception and that multiple access limitations were placed upon the material.

Further correspondence has revealed that AIME does not actually legally represent the distributors whom they judge us to have violated; nevertheless the lawyers for AIME disagree with our interpretation of fair use and face-to-face copyright exemptions. There is currently no case law in this specific area to help guide the discussion. We will be meeting with campus counsel in the near future to discuss next steps.

2. IT Strategic Plan. AVC Jim Davis

The FCET saw an early version of this last spring. The current status of the process is that in late September Jim had a briefing with Gene Block and Scott Waugh and they gave their 'go ahead' for this to go to the campus for feedback. Jim wanted to state that 'go ahead' from Gene and Scott meant they endorsed this as a directional platform but that there are still lots to discuss regarding the details and how this is actually done. By bringing this to the campus in meetings like this he hopes to get to those more detailed questions. The ITPB has already been briefed, now he wants to hear from the FCET.

Jim began by addressing one of the issues that was brought up when the FCET first commented on the IT Strategic Plan. Last spring the FCET found it difficult to identify what problems the plan was trying to solve and felt that this needed to be stated very clearly. Jim wanted to now respond to this question in five ways:

When you look at Scott’s academic plan, it talks about collaboration and interdisciplinary activity. There is this notion of a need for competitiveness as a result of institutional capability. The campus should be able to engage in interdisciplinary, inter-institutional and peer to peer scholarly interaction with minimal IT intervention.

A second problem they are trying to address is that when he looks at what the campus spends on IT we are getting heavier on infrastructure and regulation. These costs are escalating and the current budget situation is putting even more pressure on this.

A third problem involves our constituency. Students and parents interacting with the campus with regard to enrolling for courses or bill paying find that there are too many entities they have to interact with. For example, a separate bill from housing, from the one for education fees.

A fourth problem he is trying to address is the amount of resources the campus has to apply to reconcile the data between units. Research administration data, financial data, grant data.

The fifth is the current fiscal situation where people and capability are getting cut, academic units are being hit hard. How can we make better use of resources.

The plan recognizes that local units foster much innovation and recognizes that innovation is important, but so are large scale innovations. Often units optimized their IT within their unit, but now with collaboration and interdisciplinary projects, individuals must cross units.

This plan is different from many IT Strategic plans in that its operating model is not so much about ‘What to do’, but ‘How to do’ it.

	Institutional	Regional	Local
End user & Support	Institutional Processes Integrated or Shared Applications & Data		Local Processes Local Applications, Shared Application Extensions & Data
Process & Information			
Application & Data			
Middle Applications	Institutionally Provisioned Shared Infrastructure (Central or Blended)		Locally Provisioned Unique Infrastructure (Decentralized or Blended)
OS & Platforms			
Server & Device			
Data Centers			
Networking & Comm			

Figure 1 - Four Quadrant Operating Model

At this point in the meeting the discussion began.

Members felt some of the goals were inherently contradictory, that campus experience had shown that innovation was often at the local level. As an example, it was cited that SSC's instance of the CCLE was serving as a sort of hub of innovation for the project. Jim did not dispute this and said that research and education, things like the CCLE are in the upper right hand corner of the matrix (figure 1). The decision to use a system like CCLE is value based. However, things in the lower left are the most controversial to move into being institutionally provisioned. Networking would be an example. Do you need to 'hug' your server.

The committee's response to this was a deep concern about an erosion of accountability and responsiveness. In some members' experience, larger, more removed groups don't care about your needs because they have too many people to deal with so individual's issues don't matter. The committee also questioned the cost of change, to which Jim agreed that the devil is in the details.

The Anderson School's experience is that many of us face these same issues in a microcosm in our own units. Anderson's approach was predicated on the realization that modern network technology makes location unnecessary. Service could be centrally provisioned but remain distributed. They have had great success with locating someone in the unit. They have been pleasantly surprised to even find local units with .25 of an FTE coming to the central group to see what can be done if that FTE is given over to the central group. Jim felt that this touched on what he termed blended or layered services and he agrees that local support needs to be local.

The conversation then turned to funding. Referring back to Figure 1, Jim felt it was again in the lower left that worried people the most. These are things currently funded by things like TIF (Technology Infrastructure Fee). An example would be Enterprise Messaging (EM), the campus Exchange email system. This quadrant was services that all units are paying for so why should you replicate them locally? But then you had cases like the Medical Center which had built out its own enterprise email system, yet finds itself having to pay to support EM via the TIF fee.

The committee cautioned that you needed to build a process that understands that not every unit has the same needs at the same time. Need a process that will ensure that the service will be there when it is needed. The Anderson School had the example of when it instituted its own payment system. At the time, the campus was not allowing tuition to be paid via credit card, but the business school found itself in a situation where it was the only business school in the nation not accepting credit card payment for tuition. It felt compelled to create one which it still runs even though now the campus does provide credit card payment.

Trust was expressed as a key issue. Members wanted to be clear that when we discuss trust, we're talking about creating systems that work and are earning trust, not just pulling the wool over people's eyes. Committee members commented that in their experience, local control worked better and that many faculty will question whether things can change. Jim wanted to clarify that the plan is not repudiation on the existing model. The past has worked well, but things have changed.

The committee remarked that nothing wins trust like money. If by moving services to being institutionally provisioned the campus realizes economies of scale, share some of that money so that the units also see the benefits of economies of scale.

Others commented that innovation is so fast in many cases it is hard to achieve economies of scale, and a distributed system is simply more agile. Jim agreed and said he wants that sort of innovation on the right hand side, that he wanted to institutionally provide services that are more staid. Members cautioned that even with the more stable technologies there needed to be caution that the distance between the client and the service provider is not too great, and that the unit providing the service was not responsible for too many people to care, or to know (and even in some cases anticipate) what the users issues were. It is hard to put a dollar value on the savings created by organizational intelligence, but we know that organizations that know their users and their needs spend less time diagnosing issues and solving problems.

When asked what Jim saw as the single greatest opportunity for efficiency gains, his response was in the realm of data centers and servers.

3. E-sections. Larry Loehner

The committee ran out of time and was unable to engage in a discussion of E-Sections, however Larry did give a brief introduction and solicited volunteers to form a small work group to help define the pilot more. John Mamer, Lisa Snyder and Julie Austin volunteered to be a part of the working group.

Judi Smith has asked that OID help to pilot an 'E-Section' course offering in the College. The idea is that students would still attend an in-person discussion section but that for their lecture they would only view it online via Bruincast rather than in the lecture hall.

Next Meeting: Thursday December 3rd 10:00-11:30pm in Powell 186
