Academic Computing Steering Committee
(AcCSC)

Minutes of Meetings:
March 2, 2001; ME conference room; 9:45 am

Present: Batson, Cossey, Keller, Klein, McFadden, Traver

Review of last meeting's minutes

Mellon survey on technology and distance learning. Doug distributed a draft response to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation survey on institutional issues in using technology and distance learning. There were several suggestions from the group for changes:

(1) Add to the greatest concerns: from an institutional standpoint, the cost of keeping hardware and software current, support staff, and providing training.

(2) Indicate a concern over how to judge the quality of DL courses offered elsewhere, and when and if we should let our students earn credit taking DL courses from other institutions.

The revised version of the survey is posted here.

Yahoo Internet Life Most Wired Campus survey. Dave Cossey has distributed some information to senior staff about CLAC and other schools which are opting out of the survey. Christie Sorum and other staff will review our participation. We seem to be leaning toward no at the moment. For details of who is opting out and why, see the discussion at: http://whodunit.uchicago.edu/misc/yil-nonpart.html

Here is the "NO" list of CLAC schools as of Feb. 27,
Distance Learning. Members of AAC would like to be involved in the discussion of the role of DL at Union College. Doug has been invited to attend the AAC meeting on March 12. There seem to be a number of issues:

1. Will AAC see and approve any Union DL courses (including courses jointly developed between Union and other institutions, like Hobart-William Smith)?

   (Answer: Yes)

2. How will we assess Union sponsored or Union sanctioned DL courses?

   (Answer: The same ways we assess any classroom course, with perhaps additional questions related to the technology and technology support.)

3. How will we assess DL courses that our students take from other institutions, for which students wish to transfer credits to Union? And as a corollary, is there something inherently different, and by implication
inferior, about DL courses which implies that DL courses should be treated differently, with tighter restrictions, additional levels of review, and/or lower numbers allowed?

(Answer: The Committee on Transfer Credits established by the AAC which looked at these questions chose to make no distinction between DL courses and other courses taken elsewhere. All would be subject to the same review process, and would need to be approved by the relevant department chair. After a student has enrolled at Union, the maximum total number of courses of all kinds that could be transferred is three. The issue here appears to be less about DL, and more about defining what is the unique quality of a Union education, a part of an intellectual and social community, in residence and in the classroom. How much of that is lost by any course taken from another institution, whether by DL, by videoconference, or in their classroom?)

4. Are Modern Languages being particularly targeted for DL?

(Answer: This will be up to ML, and whether they want to use DL. The only sense in which they are "targeted" is that we have a Mellon grant with HWS which stipulates that we try using DL to teach prerequisite courses for some of our shared international study programs. These may or may not be language courses. The first one will be a culture of Vietnam course. Charles pointed out that ML teaches much more than language in language courses, and of course also teach culture and literature and society in MLT (modern languages in translation) courses.

Christie has affirmed that IF ML chooses to use DL, it should be done to enrich the curriculum, and certainly not to reduce faculty lines.)

AcCSC Membership. Christie has asked that we formalize the requirement that at least one member of this committee serve also on AAC. We will write up our formal Committee structure.
**Electronic Portfolios.** Cherrice reported that the pilot use of electronic portfolios for this year's Engineering freshmen has not been without its kinks. Students are not convinced of the value of keeping the portfolio, and so many do not, or do so grudgingly.

**Becker Hall and Web Advising.** Union has received $100,000 from the George I. Alden Trust in support of technology in the new Integrated Career and Advising Center, to be located in Becker Hall. Half of the grant will be for initial equipment, and half will go into a technology endowment.

The web advising project is funded, and the pilot is expected to be operational by September, with full rollout by January, 2002.

**Library Update.** Dave Cossey reported that Schaffer Library is underwriting a subscription to turnitin.com, (Turn-it-in) an online plagiarism detection service. Tom and Kimmo will continue to explore ways to combat this growing problem.

Tom McFadden reported that in his opinion Questia, the online library service heavily engaged to marketing to students, has very serious shortcomings in its collection. He expressed concern that students not come to think that is represents a one-stop research tool.

Schaffer Library has a pilot digital reserve system running. Tom will supply more details, and will make sure that those in GMI involved in the Online Bioethics program are informed. The advantages of digital reserve over an individual faculty website are (1) the Library will insure that we are in compliance with our own copyright policy, and (2) the library will do the work of getting the documents online.

**Network Services.** Dave acknowledged that the Schaffer technology endowment will help upgrade our main internet router, which needs a $15K upgrade, following bad advice (and a bad router) from our internet provider. We hope and expect that this new
box will fully support our upgraded connection when it comes available later this Spring.

Next meeting: We will meet with the College lawyer to go over several documents early Spring term, time and place TBA.