Academic Computing Steering Committee (AcCSC)

Minutes of Meetings:
April 18, 2002; S&E basement (not 002), 3:30 pm
Amended April 19, 2002 in blue.

Present: Batson, Bauman, Keller, Klein, Lesh, Sener, Traver, Tredwell

Join an online discussion of Academic Computing at Union College

Review of last meeting’s minutes.

1. Lab Management. On Friday, March 29 ITS hosted a meeting of all academic lab managers at Union. Topics on the agenda included:

- Summer plans – for upgrades in public labs and electronic classrooms
- Networking issues – including wireless directions; security concerns, issues and implementations
- General-purpose software licenses for Union College
- Summer workshop(s), training, etc.

Click here for the PowerPoint presentation that D. Cossey gave.

In addition to ITS staff, the following technology coordinators were invited:

- Richard Willing
- Daniel Burns
- Mark Knowles
- Karen Lou
License management is becoming an important issue, as evidenced by a recent article of the Chronicle of Higher Education, "To Lease or to Buy? Microsoft's New Pricing Policy" (April 18, 2002).

2. CET Regional Center meeting. On Friday, April 12, D. Keller attended the Mellon-sponsored Center for Educational Technology meeting at Middlebury College. Her report is as follows:

The meeting on Friday [April 12] at the CET in Middlebury was very interesting. There were about 50-60 people representing Mellon Colleges in attendance. The focus was on brainstorming ways that the CET can support Mellon colleges in collaborating, especially in ways that save money.

One new initiative is starting on developing Arabic reference materials that will be shared by all colleges. The CET is looking for experts to come to a summer workshop to participate in this project. I don't know anyone offhand on campus who might be appropriate. Any suggestions?

Another new initiative that will be starting will focus on Bioinformatics. They will be looking for participants to partner with other colleges. This could be a good opportunity for us.

CET is also looking for volunteers to do training for them to augment their technical staff. This was not well defined. We were asked to provide them with a list of topics that our local experts would be willing to
teach.

CET is looking for ways that Mellon schools can participate in INTERNET 2. They are looking for help from every college to pressure that government to make access more attainable.

CET is looking to share information on major types of projects or technology so every college doesn't have to reinvent the wheel. An example is the information on wireless networking that has been collected from colleges that have installed wireless. They intend to do more of this type of information sharing.

Summer, next year, there will be a month long Advanced Student Technology Program at the CET for students. Students will then be expected to work with faculty on projects. There will be 2 tracks

- web applications covering databases, linux, and php
- advanced digital media - mostly videoproduction

Other tidbits:

- Reference Librarians at Wesleyan do all Word, Excel and PowerPoint training for faculty and students

- Suggestion put forth to "hire" colleagues from other colleges who have extensive experience in areas, e.g. evaluate classroom designs, evaluate wireless networking plans.

- Software mentioned of interest. Synchronize can control student PCs in class. SecureExam can disable all applications except Word for taking exams. FastTrack Schedule is a cross platform, networkable project management software package.

- CET is accepting proposals for projects to be done next summer. The deadline is in December Must involve more than one college.
This group will meet again in the Fall.

--Submitted by D. Keller.

Links:

- [NITLE (National Institute for Technology in Liberal Education)](http://www.nitle.org)
- [CET (Center for Educational Technology)](http://www.centrex.org)
- [CET's proposal to the Mellon Foundation](http://www.centrex.org/proposal.pdf), outlining many of the organization's plans and objectives.

Discussion: We discussed proposing to the Math and Bio departments that they add a Bioinformatics track to the upcoming undergraduate Math conference to be hosted by Union.

We discussed applications that Union might have for Internet-2, including internet video; sharing access to our atomic force microscope; giving our faculty and students access to data-intensive distant research tools and databases. (See Internet-2 article in the Chronicle: "[New York's Natural History Museum Pioneers Use of Internet2](http://www.nytimes.com/2002/04/17/science/new-yorks-natural-history-museum-pioneers-use-of-internet2.html)" (April 17).

Cherrice wondered about outreach programs that Union and RPI are exploring to reach high school students; this probably falls outside the scope of Mellon and CET.

Lloyd mentioned the idea of jointly developing an online ESL program for CET schools. This sounded like an idea that would fit the CET guidelines. ([Click here](http://www.centrex.org/proposal.pdf) for the CET RFP as a Word document.)

The student technology workshop sounded like a perfect fit for our U*STAR students.

Doug mentioned that Union will be hosting two IT conferences this Spring, we are seeking CET funding for the first, and will use some of our Mellon funds for the second.:
3. **Web questions.** Several questions were raised about the College's website.

Tom Smith (TS) has sent answers to a number of the questions raised:

- Can we get a report on how the site is used? What parts get the most hits; what parts the least? For example, are Departmental sites used? Which ones? Why?


PLEASE NOTE that stats have been incorrect since we launched the new web server (March 23). We're working on fixing the problem.

As I discussed with Doug, this stats package is not perfect, but it's pretty good. I'm certainly open to suggestions for new ones. When you get to the week you're interested in, click on "server" and then "pages." This will list the top 500 pages, ranked by unique visitors. You can search for a particular department by using your browser's search mechanism (usually ctrl-f).

Here's a list of the top ten pages, ranked by unique visitors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Visits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>7,057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>/Academics</td>
<td>2,373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>/Search</td>
<td>1,286</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>/News</td>
<td>1,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>/Academics/Schedules</td>
<td>1,218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>/Admissions</td>
<td>1,208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>/Academics/Departments</td>
<td>1,169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>/PUBLIC/LIBRARY</td>
<td>922</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How can we encourage Departments and programs to keep their sites current and professional? Can U*STAR help? Diane pointed out that there is an online request form for those wanting help from U*STAR. Fuat suggested that each Divisional representative take the responsibility for reviewing websites of the Departments in his or her Division, and provide a report, perhaps to U*STAR for pro-active help. With the dropping of summer orientation, entering freshmen are likely to rely more on web-based information. Doug mentioned that he is currently updating the "Courses for Freshmen" web page. Kathryn pointed out that prospective faculty also closely examine Departmental websites.

TS: I agree that this is a problem, but there is no "silver bullet" solution. I would love to see the department chairs take more ownership of the sites. At the same time, I think it's unrealistic to expect students or department secretaries to maintain great web sites, even if we had the time to train them all. It's small consolation, but I think every school is in the same boat.

Can we have a central, unified International Programs website?

TS: Yes, I would love to have a central, unified International Programs site. I just need a volunteer to gather content and answer my questions.

DK: I have collected some relevant links (last revised in Feb., 2002) at:
http://minerva.union.edu/kleind/ta

What is the status of the pilot online faculty directory? Click here for a mock-up of what the pages might look like.
TS: Not yet beyond the prototype stage, but still very much want to do. One of the things holding me back was determining who's "in" and who's "out" on a year-to-year basis. However, I think we can approach it as a voluntary deal, where we start with faculty who express an interest and build from there.

Bottom line: I'll bring this project back to the front burner, and maybe start with volunteer faculty on the ACSC.

4. Administrative Computing. ITS Administrative Services has issued a summary of recent accomplishments and near-term goals. Refer to the [April Update](http://minerva.union.edu/accsc/Archives/Minutes-2002-04) at the Administrative Computing Steering Committee website.


Meeting adjourned at 4:25.
Next meeting: Thursday, April 25, 2002; 3:30, Steinmetz 237.