Academic Computing Steering Committee (AcCSC)

Minutes of Meetings:
October 29, 2004, Reamer Campus Center, 2nd floor, noon

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

Review of last meeting's minutes

1. Laptop Policy. After the last meeting F. Sener circulated the results of some laptop insurance research. [See the attached]

The committee had a wide-ranging and productive discussion of the issues surrounding a clear and fair policy for faculty (and staff) laptop computers.

It is understood that the College contribution to a new laptop computer will be $1,400, with the faculty member arranging for additional funding if the desired laptop costs more.

The major issue is insuring the laptop. College desktop computers are insured by the College's "self-insurance." That is, we have no outside insurance coverage, and if there is damage or loss, the College essentially "eats" the loss. ITS does not, in fact, have a reserve fund, either of its own, or from some central Finance Office pool, against which to draw against such damage or loss. Thus, in the past, ITS has effectively not been insured.

Laptops have greater vulnerability to both damage and loss, because of their size, their portability, and the fact that by design, laptops are intended to be taken off campus -- home, to conferences, on terms abroad, etc.
Given this heightened risk of damage or loss, ITS is not in a position to be solely responsible. The question is how to fairly and equitably protect faculty who choose laptops, and at the same time create an incentive for them to exercise due diligence in protecting their laptops, both on campus and off.

The following possibilities were mooted:

- Requiring faculty to choose whether to buy 3rd party insurance (at $80/year) or waive insurance, with the understanding that waiving insurance makes them 100 percent liable for damage or loss.

- Same as above, but having the College subsidize some percentage (half?) of the annual premium.

- Require faculty to pay a modest fee ($40/year) into a College escrow account to create a real self-insurance fund. This assumes that the College's actual damages and losses can be covered by this fee.

- Same as previous, but have the College (ITS? Finance Office?) put up the money to create the self-insurance fund.

- Same as previous, but impose a modest but significant deductible on laptop holders, say $250, to provide an incentive for care, and to make charges fall on faculty only when trouble occurs. This avoids the appearance (fact?) of nickling and diming faculty with additional fees. It does mean that someone (ITS? Finance?) will have to incur and extra $40/year for each laptop computer supported. This adds up; it amounts to $4,000 per year for each 100 laptops.

Doug and Dave will meet with representatives of the Finance Office to try to establish a workable policy.

The complicating issue of joint ownership, when faculty member, or the member's Department, has invested in the computer, was tabled. [The editor makes these
observations: if the additional funds come from any College budget, then the computer clearly belongs entirely to the College. If the individual chooses to contribute funds, why not have the individual make a (tax deductible) gift to the College. The computer then belongs entirely to the College. The only remaining complication then becomes the buyout amount at the end of the useful life of the computer.]

2. New Media Center. Union has been invited to apply for membership in the New Media Center consortium. Our application went in October 18. More information at http://www.nmc.org/. Diane Keller announced that today (Oct. 29) she received notification that our application had been accepted.

3. Report from Educause. D. Keller, D. Cossey, and M. Parlett-Sweeney recently returned from the national Educause convention. This item was tabled, and will be addressed at our next meeting, and/or through an appended document. http://www.educause.edu/E04/

4. Microsoft Outlook policy. Explanation of why the College is moving faculty and staff onto Microsoft Outlook. When the UNIX mail server IDOL is retired, it will be replaced with a Microsoft Exchange server. This will mean that any faculty or staff not currently on Exchange will have to migrate. In particular, we will not have POP mail, and Eudora will no longer be an option. This is being done because ITS finds Microsoft servers less expensive to purchase, and far easier to administer. Assistance will be given in migrating faculty to the new system. (All new faculty and many existing faculty have already been moved.)

5. Photo rosters. ITS, working with the Security office, has made student photos available on class roster pages, beginning with the Winter, 2005 courses. To access the photo rosters:

- click on "Academics" from the Union College home page
- click on "Course & Exam Schedules" please click here for course listings
- enter your email user name and password
- click on the desired year and term
- click on desired department
- click on desired course

The direct link to the login page is: http://www.union.edu/Academics/Schedules/
Note that any class roster (with photos) can be copied and pasted into Excel.

Next meeting: to be determined

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