Academic Computing Steering Committee (AcCSC)

Minutes of Meetings:
November 14, 2002

Present: Cossey, Keller, Klein, Lesh, Smith

Review of last meeting's minutes.

1. Wireless on Campus. We have wireless access in Library, Olin (part), Steinmetz (part), Nott, Campus Center, Becker Hall, Library plaza (all the way to West). Plans for expansion include the common spaces of dorms and the new Houses in the House System. Recent press has raised concerns with wireless access in classrooms, and potential distractions. It was suggested that committee members meet occasionally with student leaders to hear their suggestions and concerns, regarding wireless and any other issues.

2. Department webs. T. Smith reminded us that Roxanne DeHammel has invited academic departments to ask for help. Performing Arts (Theater) and Latin American Studies have responded so far. We should continue to talk up this opportunity. We should continue to mention this at Division and Chairs meetings. We should suggest that evaluating a Department's website be part of a regular external departmental review.

Since the committee meeting, Doug has had conversations with faculty who would like to make Department-maintained websites more visible, and more exciting. This committee suggested things like cycling images. This of course goes hand-in-hand with also making them correct, complete, and up-to-date, with an identified web steward. The most recent list of web stewards (2001) is posted here. We
Question for T. Smith: What is the status of an online, database-driven faculty/staff directory suitable for inclusion in Departmental sites?

3. CET update. Diane Keller recently attended a meeting of CET (Center for Educational Technology) liaisons to discuss the past and future of Mellon technology money. There were presentations from Blackboard and WebCT, and a session on the Open Knowledge Imitative (OKI) from MIT and Stanford. They are developing their own software "stages" with plans to fit in java-based modules. The audience was interested but skeptical.

Our Blackboard went from $5K to $7.5K with $6K in support, for basic level. More advanced levels have a portal and tie in to administrative database. The cost for the full enterprise Blackboard is over $50K per year. With it, we could purchase plug-in modules from third part vendors, or create our own learning modules which we could share/sell. Blackboard bought out Promethius, another academic-developed course management system, so it will be interesting to see the relationship between Blackboard and OKI.

4. ITS update. Kathryn asked about the ITS budget, and how we were doing (in the current budget climate) for staff and hardware/software. Dave C. reported that deploying thin clients on the administrative side was saving some HW money, but that as the number of services ITS supports continues to grow, staffing (numbers and pay) continues to be a real concern. Faculty on the committee also expressed concern that electronic classrooms needed more support, so that problems, even on individual student machines, were identified and fixed more promptly than is currently happening.

Next meeting: Winter term, 2003