Senate Computing and Information Technology Committee
April 16, 2020 -- 1:30PM
Room 717 CL by Zoom

Attending: Dmitriy Babichenko, Chris Bonneau, Ken Doty, Irene Frieze, Gosia Fort, Stacie Gabriel, Daniel Gruen, Donovan Harrel, Mark Henderson, Adam Hobaugh, Arif Jamal, Jong Jeong, Alexandros Labrinidis, Young Lee, Sami Mian, Louis Passarello, Kimberly Phillips, Ralph Roskies, Susan Sereika, Michael Spring, Steve Wisniewski, Ji Young.

Approval of the Minutes: Minutes from the March 19, 2020 meeting were approved as mailed with no changes.

New Business: Feedback regarding distance learning.

Chair's Matters: (Michael Spring)

- **Dynamics of the online experience:** The online experience seems to be going well even with the occasional glitches. There was a minor issue with the Canvas migration, but it was quickly resolved. There have also been some questions about security related to Zoom, but these seem to be resolved.
- **Future role of the SCITC:** Yesterday I had an opportunity to discuss governance with Chris Bonneau and Mark Henderson. I believe we can look forward to all the existing committees being appropriately integrated. For the coming year Alex Labrinidis and Susan Sereika will be members of ITAC and will coordinate with SCITC. The plan in the future is for members of several Senate Committees to be appointed to ITAC to insure coordination with the Senate.
- **Faculty communications options (physical and virtual phones**): Adam has worked on the cost for giving virtual phones to faculty who don't have landlines. The cost starts at $40 and increases from there. Thus, departments are saving around $600 per faculty member per year. I was hoping there was a way for them to get a University number that would forward to their cellphones. Adam reports such would be possible at a cost of about $14 a month. Dimitry and others said they use chat and texting through different channels with students and students feel that is a great way of communicating. There are different ways faculty members can communicate and it appears there is not a significant pressure to use a lower cost option for a University phone number. Irene Frieze mentioned that this came up at a senate meeting, but there was no call for action. Given the lack of concern among faculty, Spring indicated the matter would be dropped unless someone on the committee objected. There were no objections.

CIO Report: (Mark Henderson, Adam Hobaugh, Lou Passarello)

- **Canvas migration -- blackboard extension:**
  - o Mark Henderson: There was an outage around 6:30 pm - 9:30 pm Tuesday evening and it was caused by Pitt IT. We were trying to preload summer courses, but the process caused the current courses to be disrupted. We apologize for any interruptions this may have caused and an e-mail was sent out to the Council of Deans for their awareness. We are now creating a list of processes to drive the defect out of the environment and prevent this from happening again.
  - o Adam Hobaugh: This migration is continuing as it was and we are continuing to get positive feedback. We are extending the Blackboard contract through December; faculty can opt in through PeopleSoft. A communication went out yesterday to the Provosts' office, Deans, and faculty through Cynthia Golden to make them aware of this.
  - o Mark Henderson: Ideally, we will be using Canvas solely but because of the pandemic, we are extending the contract for faculty members to have an easier transition to virtual classes.
  - o Alex Labrinidis: The transition to Canvas has helped faculty members and students tremendously.
  - o Michael Spring: If we are going to allow faculty to delay their migration in the fall, we need to communicate that early and clearly so they understand it is an option.
- **Zoom:**
  - o Mark Henderson: We are pleased to announce we have acquired an enterprise license for Zoom. This is due to the feedback stakeholders provided us with -- they wanted another option. We are happy to have put that in place and have had very positive feedback. Its implementation and usage has had some challenges, especially with an indication of privacy issues, though the University is feeling comfortable with their prevention of Zoom bombing. The University made changes to accommodate this a weekend ago and there have been no other challenges since.
  - o Michael Spring thinks Zoom is the most accommodating and useful of the video conferencing applications and that the only issue is what seems to be daily updates. Other than that, it beats all other applications.
  - o Ralph Roskies wanted to know if a password is a strong enough defense against Zoom bombing. Adam said that you can lock something down to only allow @pitt.edu people if you want an extra step of protection.
  - o Kenny Doty: Is there any tie-in to Panopto from the Zoom recordings? The Cloud based recordings fill up quickly. He wants to know if this can tie into Canvas as well. Adam Hobaugh said he would check on this.
- **Virtual labs for students and faculty:**
  - o Lou Passarello: There's commonality between the virtual labs and desktops. Both environments can be accessed from anywhere/anytime/from any device. There is also a remote application that can be accessed using these environments and it can give you access to local printers, devices, etc. These labs have a lot of the same

applications as the physical labs. We have had several different requests from faculty across all campuses to add applications and now we're up to around 50. All students and faculty currently have access to these environments. Adam Hobaugh requested that we share links to these to the committee.

- https://www.technology.pitt.edu/remotedevices - Device Loaner Program
- https://www.technology.pitt.edu/virtual-desktop - Enterprise Remote Access
- https://www.technology.pitt.edu/services/virtual-lab - Student Virtual Labs
- https://www.technology.pitt.edu/setup - Computer Purchases Shipped Home
- https://rdweb.wvd.microsoft.com/webclient/index.html - Link to access Virtual Lab and Remote Access Desktops

- Kenny Doty: The labs and desktops saved us a lot of time and effort to get the software engineering packages to students. I can remotely manage machines to the EDM platforms which I could not do directly from my laptop at home.

- **Virtual desktops for faculty and staff:**
    - Lou Passarello: This environment is geared more towards faculty and staff than students. Where the student lab has fifty plus applications, these have the more common enterprise applications: Office, Cloud, Perceptive Content. You can use less compute extensive devices to access this. You can call the help desk to get generic access to this.

- **Device Loaner Program:**
    - Lou Passarello: This is a program that was put in place through the Office of the Provost to help students, faculty, and staff who were lacking computing resources/access to the internet. Joe McCarthy reviews requests for these and once their approved, Pitt IT prepares and ships the devices with instructions. To date there has been 145 requests with 170 devices shipped. 93 students, 39 staff, and 13 faculty across all campuses requested these. Oakland campus has 60% of requests and Johnstown has 25%. We have received a lot of positive feedback and have reached out to the people using these devices to get their feedback.
        - Chromebooks: these can be made available to students, faculty, and staff. They would utilize the virtual workstations through these, and the software is already loaded onto these so that students are able to do their work.
        - Hot Spots: there are a variety of these. At the time of trying to acquire these, we were scurrying like every other company. We now have a variety of devices; iPhone 7s, Verizon, and AT&T devices and all can be made available to those who don't have other forms of internet access.
    - Michael Spring wanted to know if we have any sense of how many people are aware to this option. Lou Passarello said that the provost has sent out various e-mails and that he thinks it has been well advertised.
    - Kenny Doty: Have you run into issues with people without internet access AND cellular reception? Lou Passarello said that we have worked on swapping out devices for people who have had hot spot connectivity issues but that there haven't been any issues with both.

- **Securing / managing purchased computers sent to remote location:**

- Lou Passarello: The University is shipping devices directly to home addresses. This was a little challenging when it came to meeting security standards. A process has been put in place that enables a device that is registered with products such as Intune, when they are plugged in, they are connected through Azure and they encrypt the device with key applications and software. We must always have some manageability with the device to make sure it is being used safely. We also give instructions on how to properly set up the device once the user receives it. This process has been going on for around two weeks.
- Michael Spring: Are there security issues that remain or are emerging that are not under the control of the NOC? Adam Hobaugh said we've hit all of our markers for devices that are connected to the NOC but we don't have complete visibility of every device. Once we find them, we mitigate any possible risks.

Feedback regarding the pivot to distance learning

- Sami Mian: I am still involved with a couple universities and from what I've seen and heard, Pitt has had a much smoother transition to online learning compared to other universities.
- Irene Frieze: I have had some problems connecting to psychology servers and the IT people have been very helpful with having me get set up.
- Kenny Doty: The biggest headache we have had has been people turning off their devices once they remote in. Pitt IT has had great response and our faculty, staff, and students have all been appreciative of everything done. We have done a lot of preplanning and we are going to be better off on the tail end of this (remote work, remote teaching, etc).
- Michael Spring: The consensus is that you have done a phenomenal job. If the worst thing in this process is that you inadvertently stopped Blackboard for a few hours, that is very minor.

Old Business

- **Mobile Application deployment and Game hosting/publishing platform (Babichenko)**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15am.

Draft minutes submitted for review by:
Stacie Gabriel/Michael Spring
April 24, 2020