

## Senate Computing and Information Technology Committee

Sept 16, 2019 -- 10:00AM

Room 717 CL

**Attending:** Dimitriy Babichenko, Angie Bedford-Jack, Chris Bonneau, Pam Connelly, Gosia Fort, Jay Graham, Daniel Gruen, Mark Henderson, Thomas Hitter, Adam Hobaugh, Arif Jamal, Jong Jeong, Matt Lavin, Alex Labrinidis, Marty Levine, Sami Mian, Ralph Roskies, Susan Sereika, Michael Spring, Albert Tanjaya, Steve Wisniewski, Fran Yarger

**Minutes:** Minutes from April 12, 2019 meeting were approved as mailed.

### New Business:

- Policy on Electronic Information Technology Accessibility(Spring)
- Foreign Student Access to Research Computing Resources(Roskies)
- Discussion of Faculty Software Access(Sereika)

### Chair's Matters (Michael Spring)

- Spring thanked the members of the committee for arriving early given the busy schedule. He indicated that he was going to simply introduce the origin of the three items of new business and turn the meeting over to CIO Henderson for his report. The main new item is the discussion of the new Accessibility Policy for Electronic Information Technology. In accord with new guidelines for adopting policies, this policy is to be presented to Faculty Assembly soon. The SCITC was only made aware of the new policy this fall, and Spring thought it was important that it be reviewed by the SCITC. The question of graduate student access to research resources was raised by Professor Roskies as a related issue. Finally Professor Sereika has asked about software access by faculty. The question in simple form has to do with faculty accessing software for personal use versus faculty access to software through their academic unit.
- Spring mentioned that he would like to see the committee continue this year to explore how the Senate can best input into the evolving IT governance policy. Further, he indicated that one of the related issues will be the oversight of data analytics management that is being moved forward by Steven Wisniewski in the Provost's Office.

### CIO Report (Mark Henderson, Adam Hobaugh, and Jay Graham)

- CIO Mark Henderson began his report by addressing the vision he has for the evolution of computing and information services in five areas. He indicated that he is working on evolving the IT governance process such that all the stakeholders can be involved in a process that is transparent. The five areas on which he is focusing:
  1. The student experience. How do we digitize the campus and resources to make them more accessible and useable? How do we customize software for students? How do we get to personalized learning

2. How do we better support faculty at the university. What relationships should be developed with the library and other departments? How do we support research faculty are doing?
  3. How do we digitize and transform the campus to become a smart campus. How do we make students feel safe? Might the use of drones make the campus more secure? How do we make the campus safer? Can we know where people are and make sure resources are ready. For example – when there is a problem, might a drone be used to speed security responses and discourage bad behavior?
  4. How do we expand our services into the community? How do we provide resources back to the community to make Pitt and the city a better place? What are the other things that we might do?
  5. How do we have a greater impact on the region – how do we interact with the business community to make Pitt a better partner. We are trying to leverage all the talent on the campus to make Pitt better in the area of technology.
- Once we put this plan into a more consumable framework, CIO plans to ask all the constituents for input. We are going to have town hall meetings. That outlines our IT planning process. That will be communicated and vetted through the various governance processes. Overall the goal is greater efficiency and greater effectiveness. It will be transparent.. We will be laying out milestones to look at our progress.
  - Sami Mian asked how serious are you about drones for security? Mark had a set of graduate students researching drones as a mechanism for increasing security. Mark has already begun to look at ways of working with the School of computing and Information. Mian indicated that he had been a part of such an effort at the University of Arizona. Henderson invited him to be involved in the process at Pitt.
  - **Canvas LMS:** Adam Hobaugh gave an update on the transition to canvas, the new LMS. Approximately 80 faculty members, 119 courses, 3500 student enrollments. The faculty span all campuses. On the Oakland campus, they span all major schools and colleges. 20 integrations currently deployed including integrations with PeopleSoft, CDS, Panopto, Top Hat, Turnitin, Box, Office 365, and most other 3rd-party integrations currently available in Blackboard. Dimitry Babichenko has found the process rather seamless. One minor problem has been the ability to add people to courses manually. How canvas handles quizzes has been a little problem. Alex Labrinidis has also been involved and concurred that there was a little bit of a problem adding people. Waiting list adds a little bit of a problem. Otherwise, things worked the way that they are supposed to. Dimitry indicated that students aren't yelling and screaming which would be one of the first places problems would become apparent.. Everyone seems to be happy among the faculty. Dimitry asked if CSSD had a plan to survey students. Susan Sereika asked if everything that has been done in blackboard, convert automatically. The answer is that for the most part it does. For those cases that don't transmit automatically, there is "white glove" service being provided to smooth the transition for faculty.
  - **Last Pass:** Password management – about 750 active users – about 2/3<sup>rd</sup> on the professional side and 1/3 on the personal side. Going to reach out this term on full blown marketing campaign this terms. Both the premium and personal have worked

well. The enterprise edition requires some interface with CSSD. Generally, feedback has been excellent. Last pass seems to be working as advertised. One question has been about the master password recovery. There have been people who forgot and lost their master password.

- Software Availability:
  - Adobe Acrobat Pro: The University maintains a site license, but charging departments for the product is required so costs can be recovered. *Note:* A personal use only version of Adobe Creative Cloud is available free for faculty, which includes Acrobat Pro. *Note:* Students do not have free access to Acrobat Pro. Adobe software info: <https://www.technology.pitt.edu/software/adobe-software>
  - Postdoctoral Software: Currently, post-docs have access to the same software titles as university staff. After reviewing software license agreements, we plan to modify their access in early June 2019 to make it equivalent to faculty. This will result in a net increase to available software titles. A list of software that will be freely available to post-docs after the change in June will be made available at the October meeting.

### Electronic Information Technology Accessibility Policy and Procedure

Pam Connelly, Thomas Hitter and Angie Bedford-Jack talked with the SCITC about the new policy. A summary of responses to our initial questions is attached at the end of the minutes. Additional comments about our feedback is also attached.

Tom Hitter addressed the new policy on policy development. The procedural context for this new policy has to do with the new mechanisms for vetting new policies. Pam Connelly indicated that the policy on digital accessibility has been a long time coming. Two university-wide committees comprised of key stakeholders across the university have studied the issues surrounding digital accessibility over the past four years. It is a value issue, as the university is committed to access, and is also and a legal issue. Digital accessibility is required by the law. There were 300 complaints about IT accessibility in higher education, and 12 Office of Civil Rights complaints in just 2 months earlier this year against higher education in Pennsylvania. As the policy was being developed, the office on policy development was created and that process changed the policy and procedure appropriately. The Senate was consulted and put the policy to the EIDAC committee for review.

Alex indicated that he agreed with the notion of making things accessible. He was concerned with how it might impact research being submitted. It is a lot of overhead to be put on proposal submission. The question raised was how this policy would impact proposal submission. There are questions about whether this would be enforced at submission time or at contract time.

Pam and Angie Bedford Jack responded that the policy and procedure do not include proposals or ideas. Fran mentioned that federal agencies will require compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, which requires digital accessibility. Pam indicated that the Committee has been working on developing more details for the day-to-day implementation of the procedure, and that due to the complexities involved, flexibility will be necessary in effectuating the policy.

Matt Lavin asked about how this policy would be implemented. Talking about the departmental website he indicated that this is just one concern about many different concerns that would be developed by a department. The question that comes up is how the review process would take place.

By design, the committee intended that there would be a lot of flexibility how the policy and procedure are operationalized. From the outset, the developing committee looked at accessibility from a broad perspective – not just web content - since the law applies beyond just websites.

Mark Henderson indicated that his experience is that hardware as well as content and software can be an issue. Things are constantly changing. Mark's experience is that accessibility can be a show stopper, but that accessibility is something that we have to do.

Alex indicated that he is concerned that we cannot have more requirements placed on us and not get more resources to address these issues. Alex suggested that the result may be that people choose not to do things.

Fran Yarger is not sure that the policy can address the issues of resources being allocated. Bedford-Jack indicated that there are already some enterprise-level resources available and that others would need to be considered based on needs surfaced in implementation plans.

Michael Spring suggested that there are at least three kinds of situations that need to be addressed by this policy. The first, and to some extent the easiest to understand is content made available and used in the course of doing work through the world wide web. The second is electronic information and technology used in the conduct of research for particular purposes. The third involved enterprise level software and hardware decisions.

Connelly indicated that the committee was very generous in looking at how to help make things better. Bedford Jack said that people are thinking a lot more about accessibility and so we should make it the norm. This could be a learning opportunity for students.

Members of the committee went on to a discussion about student to student interactions that might be facilitated by software and whether the University was responsible for the accessibility of what they develop.

Chris Bonneau said that liability exists regardless of whether the policy is there or not. If you are teaching a web design course, you need to be concerned about accessibility. The question is how we make the technology as accessible as possible.

The committee consensus was that as yet there are too many open questions to come to a conclusion about this new policy and procedure. Over the coming month – before the October 25<sup>th</sup> meeting, they would like to see further discussion and possible some examples of how particular issues would be addressed. The committee agreed to delay any judgement about the policy and procedure until our next meeting and do use email exchange to discuss this policy.

## **Responses to initial questions provided on September 10<sup>th</sup> from VC Pam Connelly:**

Thank you so much for your comments and insights. It is great to have allies with expertise as Pitt commits to expanding digital accessibility through formalizing a policy. Digital accessibility is indeed a very complex problem, and as you explain, the importance of access to digital assets has never been more important.

As an introductory note, the issue of what is meant by “accessible” in the Policy has been raised a couple of times. The questions have centered on whether this policy provides new rights to access to EIT that a person would not otherwise have the right to access under university policy or practice, or the law. That is not the intent of the policy. The definition of accessibility will be revised to make this clear.

### **1. Why is the implementing executive not the CIO?**

CSSD was an essential member of the University-wide two committees that have studied this issue, from 2014 to the present. Historically, digital accessibility was a complex, cross-jurisdictional problem which no one office sought to own. When the most recent Technology Accessibility committee was convened, the Provost and the Senior Vice Chancellor for Engagement asked the VC of Diversity and Inclusion to chair the efforts. CSSD reported to the Provost at that time.

Since 2015, CSSD has consistently expressed the perspective that many of digital accessibility issues are content issues and therefore reside outside of CSSD purview. CSSD also conveyed that although it currently lacked accessibility expertise, it would offer technical assistance whenever needed.

Consistent with this perspective, much of the work that will be associated with this Policy and Procedure is not technical. For example, the work related to the Implementation, Reporting, and Non-compliance sections of the draft Procedure is less technical and more educational and compliance based. The Digital Accessibility Coordinator position is responsible for these less technical matters and resides within ODI.

It is the hope that CSSD will play an essential role in the digital accessibility initiative, particularly with respect to the Procurement and Exceptions sections of the draft Procedure. Pitt’s new CIO, Mark Henderson, brings with him a wealth of experience and knowledge relating to digital accessibility. Mark has indicated a commitment to accessibility and a willingness for CSSD to share in the institutional work around this issue.

### **2. How are Web Content Accessibility Guidelines to be applied to other interfaces – e.g. the windows operation system has an interface, but it is not a web interface?**

Obviously, there are hundreds of software interfaces that are not web based.

The committee chose to move beyond just “web” accessibility because the ADA and Rehabilitation Act apply far beyond our websites. The University is responsible for providing an accessible experience throughout our whole digital ecosystem.

The Guidance on Applying WCAG 2.0 to Non-Web Information and Communications Technologies ([WCAG2ICT](#)) is listed as a standard in the Policy and applies to non-web-based interfaces. If this feels insufficient because it is guidance and not normative, we can add [Section 508](#) of the Rehabilitation Act as an additional standard. We are subject to Section 508 as a federal contractor.

**3. What guidelines will be used for hardware – touch screens on mobile phones, phone interfaces generally, etc.?**

See above. Section 508 clearly outlines the requirements for [hardware](#).

**4. How does the policy impact the preparation of research proposals that plan to develop software or hardware?**

According to the draft policy, all new EIT needs to be accessible or an exception must be sought. New software or hardware should be developed with accessibility in mind. It is possible that the software could fall outside of the scope of our policy if its development or use is not part of a university program or activity. Additionally, an exception to the policy could be sought for a research proposal.

Beyond our policy, accessibility requirements are becoming more and more common and will likely soon be a general expectation. Granting agencies are following suit and adding or reinterpreting their “broaden participation” criteria to include accessibility. It would seem we would want to encourage research and development here at Pitt that includes accessibility.

**5. What is DRS (3. Compliance decisions) mentioned in the procedures?**

Disability Resources and Services – the team currently providing students, faculty, and staff with needed accommodations. They have expertise in the realm of accessibility and inclusion and therefore will play an advisory role in reviewing materials when needed. This has been clarified within the Policy.

**6. Under procedures, how will reviews and exceptions be managed such that time dependent actions – e.g. proposal submissions – will not be delayed?**

The approach behind reviews and exceptions is still being finalized. There is currently limited expertise at the University as it pertains to accessibility reviews. Various universities employ several models including team approaches and various levels of review. One under consideration here is that a short review would be performed on EIT under a certain threshold of usage and in-depth reviews would be performed for enterprise-level EIT and student-facing EIT. We have begun discussions with CSSD about the staffing for reviews and exceptions.

## Summary of Responses to the Senate's Computing and Information Technology Committee's Feedback

Below is a summary of the Senate's Computing and Information Technology Committee's feedback on the draft Electronic Information Technology (EIT) Accessibility Policy, which it provided at its September 16, 2019 meeting, as reflected in the minutes of that meeting. Below each question is our corresponding response.

### 1. What happens when a web page is found non-compliant?

**From the Policy (Section IV. D.):** Areas are responsible for meeting the requirements established in this Policy. Accordingly, at the discretion of the Senior Vice Chancellor for Engagement (SVC-E), or their designees, some or all non-compliant portions of Web pages and resources may be removed or brought into compliance by designated staff or contractors and the expense of that work may be charged to the responsible university area.

**From the Procedure (Section III. E. 1.):** All comments, suggestions, and complaints about accessibility issues sent to [accessibility@pitt.edu](mailto:accessibility@pitt.edu) will be reviewed by ODI, communicated to the relevant area, and addressed promptly by the area in consultation with ODI.

Reports made through the [online form](#) will also be reviewed and documented by ODI and communicated to the relevant area for prompt resolution.

### 2. What happens when enterprise software is found non-compliant?

**From the Policy (Section IV. D.):** Areas are responsible for meeting the requirements established in this Policy. Accordingly, at the discretion of the Senior Vice Chancellor for Engagement (SVC-E), or their designees, some or all non-compliant portions of Web pages and resources may be removed or brought into compliance by designated staff or contractors and the expense of that work may be charged to the responsible university area

**From the Policy (Section IV. C.):** Where EIT cannot be brought into compliance, University schools, units, and departments (for purposes of this policy, the term "area" will be used when referring to these entities) are responsible for providing equivalent access to the content.

All procurement or purchasing contracts for EIT must conform to these standards or satisfy an exception as described in Section IV. E.

### 3. How will review processes on proposals being submitted or being awarded be impacted?

Proposals (e.g., research proposals) are outside the scope of the policy. Only final products or content generated as part of a funded project will be subject to the policy.

### 4. Who will be involved in making a decision about what to do about web content that is found not to be compliant?

**From the Policy (Section IV. D.):** Areas are responsible for meeting the requirements established in this Policy. Accordingly, at the discretion of the Senior Vice Chancellor for Engagement (SVC-E), or their designees, some or all non-compliant portions of Web pages and resources may be removed or brought into compliance by designated staff or contractors and the expense of that work may be charged to the responsible university area

(The SVC-E will discuss issues of non-compliance with the leader of the unit.)

#### 5. How will the software acquisition review process be modified?

**From the Procedure (Section III. B.):** As set forth in the Policy, all procurement or purchasing contracts with EIT vendors must reflect the University's commitment to accessibility. To implement this directive, all Request for Proposals (RFPs) and contracts must include the following:

##### 1. Required Contractual language

Contractual language stipulating the need for compliance with WCAG 2.1, or the most current version of WCAG, should be included in all EIT contracts. Contractual language, provided by the Office of University Counsel, can be obtained from Purchasing Services.

Even if the product is currently accessible, the contract must include language that assures continued accessibility as the product is updated.

When a contract is renewed for existing EIT, an accessibility compliance clause or addendum must be added to the contract.

##### 2. Vendor Compliance Documentation

When purchasing or renewing EIT, the purchasing area should request written evidence from the vendor that their product or service conforms to each of the WCAG 2.1, or the most current version of WCAG, Level AA criteria.

Vendors may do so by submitting a [VPAT](#) (Voluntary Product Accessibility Template) in which they address each of the WCAG 2.1, or the most current version of WCAG, criteria or by completing the EIT Accessibility Checklist. The most reliable compliance documentation is completed by companies that specialize in evaluating the digital accessibility rather than by the vendor themselves.

Completed VPATs and/or EIT Accessibility Checklists will be held by Purchasing Services.

##### 3. Compliance Decisions

Using compliance documentation as well as internal evaluations, areas will work with Purchasing Services, in consultation with key partners such as ODI, Disability Resources and Services (DRS), and Computing Services and Systems Development (CSSD) to determine if the EIT meets compliance standards.

For those products/services that meet some but not all WCAG 2.1, or the most current version of WCAG, criteria, it is recommended that a roadmap for compliance be included in the contract at no charge to the university. Vendors should at a minimum be willing to make a commitment to address their accessibility problems.

#### 6. How will existing hardware and software be reviewed?

Existing software will be reviewed upon contract renewal, assuming it is software as a service. It will follow the same purchasing procedure as above.

Existing hardware or software that is not software as a service should be reviewed by units to determine compliance with the policy. The scope of existing hardware and software as well as the plan for remediation should be outlined in the implementation plan. Assistance may be sought from ODI,



Disability Resources and Services (DRS), and Computing Services and Systems Development (CSSD) to determine if the EIT meets compliance standards.

7. How will conflicts be addressed e.g. between security and accessibility, between accessibility and compatibility, between cost and security and accessibility, etc.

As set forth in the EIT Accessibility Policy and Procedure, all procurement or purchasing contracts with EIT vendors must reflect the University's commitment to accessibility. As such, if more than one equivalent product/service is available, it is advisable to choose the most accessible product. However, the most accessible choice may not align with other dominant selection criteria, and the less accessible product may be chosen. If that occurs, an exception must be sought.

(Security will not be compromised for the sake of accessibility.)

### **Additional Questions Received**

#### **Research software**

Often, we develop software / websites for research projects; even though this software is publicly accessible, it is designed to be used by a small group of subjects and the subject inclusion criteria specify whether or not the subject cohort will include subjects with disabilities. Do we need to ensure that these projects are section 508 compliant?

The policy defines fundamental EIT as “significant and used in the normal course of operations at the University to support teaching, research, or administrative functions, as determined by the relevant Department in partnership with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI).” It may be determined that this type of software/websites is not fundamental and is therefore secondary. Per the policy, while efforts should be made to make this EIT accessible, the deadline for compliance is open-ended.

Software is often developed iteratively with each iteration tested by users. Early iterations are often discarded and completely re-written / redesigned. Do we need to ensure that each publicly accessible iteration is section 508 compliant?

The policy defines fundamental EIT as “significant and used in the normal course of operations at the University to support teaching, research, or administrative functions, as determined by the relevant Department in partnership with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI).” It may be determined that this type of software in its initial stages is not fundamental and is therefore secondary. Per the policy, while efforts should be made to make this EIT accessible, the deadline for compliance is open-ended.

#### **Student projects**

I identified at least seven courses in IS and CS where students can potentially upload websites / software to publicly accessible Pitt servers. While I agree that we should teach section 508 / ADA accessibility guidelines, we cannot possibly require every single assignment to be compliant. This would add overhead to the amount of work that students need to do, in some cases would muddy the learning objectives, and in some cases be detrimental to what the learning experience.

Student-generated content is a complex use case. If it is content that others are being asked to interact with or is being made publicly available, it seems reasonable to suggest it should be accessible and is

subject to the policy. The barrier it creates for someone with a disability is the same, regardless of who the creator of the content is.

To your point, the practical implementation of this expectation is, however, challenging. I'd suggest we should not expect to see perfect WCAG or 508 compliance from students, but we should arm them with best practices and practical guidelines for accessibility when assigning projects like this.

Finally, if inaccessible, the lifecycle of the product should be considered. Once the course is over, if the software/websites are inaccessible they should be removed from public access