

Senate Computing and Information Technology Committee

January 18, 2019 -- 10:30AM

Room 717 CL

Attending: Dmitriy Babichenko, Kenny Doty, Irene Frieze, Arif Jamal, Alex Labrinidis, Marty Levine, Ralph Roskies, Susan Sereika, Michael Spring, Albert Tanjaya, Jinx Walton, Fran Yarger

Minutes: Minutes from December 14, 2018 meeting were approved as mailed. A correction was made to the name of one committee member – Susan Sereika.

New Business:

There was no new business.

Chair's Matters (Michael Spring)

LMS Report: Spring introduced the LMS report. The next important date is April 2019 when the assessment groups suggests signing a contract for the Canvas product. This would lead to implementation in the Fall of 2020 – less than 2 years from now. The report picks the industry leaders and ends up providing a slight advantage to Canvas. The one thing that is of some concern is a lack of commentary on how faculty compared the experience of mounting a course to the three systems and some assessment of the relative costs of migrating courses that currently exist to the new systems.

Spring entered written comments on the system from Maura McCall, who was unable to attend the meeting. She indicated that the SWOT analysis was great. Her experience over many years of taking classes is that the faculty need to know how to use the platform. You can purchase the best platform ever, but if the faculty don't use it properly, it's worthless. Every faculty member should know how to use the platform and I would suggest that it be a requirement with a test and certification. Most students will learn how to use the platform, but it would be helpful to have some sort of video or training available for those of us who may need assistance. It is important that the user interface can be adapted for those whose sight is impaired?

Walton indicated that one instigating force was request from faculty who don't like course web. Canvas is the basis of most of requests. Walton suggested that the report may need to be rewritten. There were more faculty and student involved. CIDDE reached out to heavy users and asked for their input. There are several things that have not yet been done. Once CSSD makes its final recommendation, it will move back to the Provost's office for implementation. The think that is not yet known is how long it will take to implement. The next steps are looking at costs, looking at implementation, looking at training for faculty.

Labrinidis indicated that the University has obtained an enterprise license for Top Hat – a product that can be used for in class polling. Given the interest in the system, it is important that it is compatible with both CourseWeb and Canvas. Alex indicated that he would not favor required training for any system that would be used.

Fran Yarger indicated it would be important for there to be a singular system that would provide students with a consistent experience. Spring agreed indicating that while he used a system he had developed, student became so dependent on CourseWeb, that they had difficulty using his system because it wasn't integrated – if it wasn't on CourseWeb, it wasn't real! Walton agreed that the transition costs in terms of effort are going to be high. Spring indicated that transition for faculty would be one problem, but a perhaps greater problem will be that for at least four years, students will have to transition from one system to another.

Babichenko indicated that he felt there was a need to insure faculty get the training they need to implement the new system. As we do more and more with computing and data science it becomes important that the systems do more to meet the needs of all the disciplines. Things like GitHub need to be integrated into a course management system. Spring suggested that it may be important to pick four or five categories of courses that have different needs – project intensive, exam intensive, paper intensive, discussion intensive, blended, etc. to see if the various needs of all different types of courses are being met.

Walton suggested that we set up some proof of concept examples that we can use to make a judgement.

There is pressure to move with some speed on this issue. At the same time, at least from a Senate perspective, it is important to make sure we have the data we need to provide a sound assessment. SCITC would endorse a transition provided that the benefits will outweigh the costs and that it will support/benefit all faculty.

Next Steps on Information Technology Study by Deloitte: The report is a series of recommendations and it will be important for the University to look at each of the recommendations and decide what they want to do. Each aspect of the report will require more feedback from the University community.

Spring indicated that the SCITC needs to review and comment on the full report. Spring made clear that it was his personal opinion that the broad set of committees suggested by the report were well beyond the workload that could be managed by a Senate committee. At the same time, it was not clear from the report that the Senate would be involved in a way that would allow it to serve its role in keeping communication channels open.

The university needs to set out its top level priorities. IT isn't broken, but we can do better. We can be proactive rather than reactive. The University can do a better job of coordinating, and streamlining purchasing and finance. We can increase transparency and communication with regards to governance

The report also addresses UPMC and the relationship between UPMC and Pitt in the area of IT is likely to be complicated. The relationship between UPMC and Pitt is complicated by the differing natures of the regulations and laws that govern the organizations. There are several locations in which both PittNet and the UPMC networks exist side by side. PittNet is designed to support faculty and their research i.e. it is a high-bandwidth, robust network with those needs in mind. PittNet has connections to Research and Education Networks as well as

Internet2, all resources of value to researchers. UPMC is running a clinical network that is appropriately restricted and in general is less capable of supporting high-end research needs. For this reason many faculty have asked to be connected directly to PittNet.

Search Committee: Spring asked committee member to let him know if they would be willing to serve on the search committee if we are asked to. The Chancellor is working with a search firm. He is confident that it will be a quick search. Spring will communicate with the committee related to the search.

CIO Report (Jinx Walton)

Transition to the new CIO: The Chancellor has engaged a search firm and expects it will be a rather quick search. Walton is making sure that most major decisions have been made. Adam Hobaugh will be operating as the interim CIO but all the directors will be engaged in keeping the ship in running order.

The policy on policies will have a lot to say about the way the CIO will relate to the various units.

Assessment: Comments were due by last Friday. CSSD is beginning to put them together. Walton will be combining the comments into a report by next week. One of the big issues in the comments that were made included many about governance. The report helps to clarify the relationship between the many units and CSSD. People will have insight into what is going on.

Old Business

Mobile Apps and Game Hosting: Babichenko is still working with Labrinidis on a report related to Mobile application deployment and publishing at Pitt as well as a Game hosting / publishing platform. He had submitted it to the chair who asked him to add one paragraph on the action being requested and then distribute it to the full committee. He agreed to do that for the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned 11:40a.

Draft minutes submitted for review by:

Michael Spring
January 24, 2019