Minutes of the

Computing Advisory Committee

August 16, 1999

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Those attending: Al Allen, Patti Cosgrove, Larry Schilling, JP Dunn, Jim Duggan, Duke Koch, Dennis Leitner, Carolyn Snyder, Geoff Nathan (recorder), Ruth Bernhardt, David Blakesley

1) Geoff reported on a meeting with the new Vice Chancellor for Administration, Glenn Poshard. Dr. Poshard is very supportive of the work of the committee and its recommendations, and asked for the committee to work up financial consequences for those of its recommendations that have not yet been implemented.

2) The committee had asked Patti Cosgrove, Director of computer labs for IT to contribute to a discussion on the future of computer labs on campus. She began by saying that labs exist to support classes and to permit the use of classroom software, and that this was their primary function. She also pointed out that there are large numbers of commuter students who need access to computers during the day, even if they own computers at their homes. Finally, there are a significant number of our students who cannot afford to purchase computers of their own.

Patti is currently updating the web listing of labs on campus, but at the moment IT has about 450 computers in labs, and there are about 150 more in the Library. The IT labs are open 20 hours per day, while those in the library are generally available 24 hours per day. A recent calculation shows that the costs of supporting those computers is about $555,000 per year, which works out to about $1,300 per year in pure support costs (i.e. not including hardware).

Switching to the topic of universal computer ownership it was pointed out that computers can now be considered in a financial aid package if the computer is required for a degree, a requirement that is very easily satisfied these days. Several new labs have recently been opened, although not all of them are unlimited public access. Someone pointed out that classroom computers is a separate issue from general public access computers. This led to a discussion of whether IT should be running labs for departments that have significant labs of their own. One issue that this raises is that of different lab designs for different purposes. This also raises the question of whether decisions about soft and hardware are best made at the individual departmental level or at the university-wide (presumably IT) level.

Carolyn pointed out that the recent NCA study of SIU stated that the team found campus departments wanted to run their own labs, but only if they had the funds needed to operate them. However, this raises the problem of access--can departmental labs be kept open early in the morning and late at night?

In the Library there will be a few public ethernet jacks available with dynamic IP assignment. This started a discussion about security and identification, and led to a philosophical discussion about open access (a library goal) and security against incursions (an IT goal). There was no resolution of this age-old question.

3) The resolution presented by the sub-committee on reward was moved by Dennis and seconded by JP Dunn. After brief discussion it was passed almost unanimously. The one objection that was raised was a philosophical problem with relying on non-professionals to keep our computers running. The resolution will be sent to Chancellor Jackson, Provost Guernsey, Vice Chancellor Poshard and the heads of the Senate, AP Council, the Civil Service Council and would be published on the web.

4) Al Allen reported that some components for the new modem pool are still in the procurement process, and that Oracle is not yet running.

5) There was an article about Internet 2 in the Chronicle the previous week, and we will make copies of Chancellor Jackson's memo, Charlie Campbell's materials on networking and other related issues for the next meeting.

The next meeting will be September 3 at 8 AM in the Library Dean's Conference room, when we will meet with Glenn Poshard.

Last Updated: August 26, 1999--*DB*

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