Minutes of the

Computing Advisory Committee

September 15, 1999

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Those attending: JP Dunn, Pierre Barrette, Mike Wainer, Susan Logue (for Carolyn Snyder), David Blakesley, Larry Schilling, Duke Koch, Geoff Nathan (recorder), Dennis Leitner

Geoff began with a summary of the revised campus-wide Y2K initiative recently ordered by Chancellor Jackson. A committee consisting of Glenn Poshard, Bill Capie, Mike Schwartz and Geoff Nathan put together a plan to enlist LAN administrators to do a quick assessment of Y2K compliance for all desktops, servers, and other date-sensitive equipment on campus. The results will be reported on a spreadsheet, then forwarded to Mike Schwartz, who will present a final summary to Jackson on October 1. This initiative supersedes the desktop initiative started by Mary Wallace and continued by Geoff Nathan, which turned out to be too overwhelming a job to be done by the team available.

Discussion of this decision centered around the need for extra help to install whatever needed to be fixed, and again raised the issue of non-experts being recruited to do computer work on campus.

Duke raised the question of the Track It software that was purchased for the original survey. Approximately 1000 computers have already been surveyed, and that database could be mined for valuable information (the new initiative does not inventory compliant equipment). However, the data collection is incomplete. Duke pointed out that, in principle, client software could be installed on every computer on campus and the program could query each computer on a regular basis (or even on a one-time only basis) and the campus database could be kept up to date. Some discussion about the political consequences of this kind of tracking ensued, but no conclusions were reached.

The next question to be raised was the direction and future of IT. This was occasioned by the ongoing search for a director of IT. The degree to which IT was intended to be a service department, vs. a policy-making unit was discussed. Members were asked to poll their friends in other campuses to get a sense of what kinds of IT departments seemed to be popular and/or working well. One issue that occasioned discussion was whether the three-tiered help system envisaged by the CAC Long-Range plan was what the campus wanted, or whether the campus would prefer the 'Maytag Repair Man' model, where you just call and somebody comes to help.

Geoff will poll the LAN listserv about this issue.

Another question raised had to do with the difficulty of connecting additional computers to the campus backbone given the lack of sufficient numbers of hubs. One possibility which was suggested was the use of mini-hubs, which are much cheaper than regular hubs.

The subcommittee on Internet 2 will meet at 9:30 on Monday, September 27 in the Library conference room, while the CAC itself will meet one hour earlier than that, 8:30 AM in the same place.

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