

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMPUTING AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS (SCCIS)

MINUTES

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1997

1:00 - 2:30

STUDIO C, RARIG CENTER

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate or Twin Cities Campus Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represent the view or, nor are they binding on the Senate or Assembly, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Gary Jahn (chair), Ron Anderson, Steve Cawley, James Chelikowsky, Vicki Gaylord, Harold Grotevant, Andy Lopez, Don Riley, Andy Rotering, William Peterson, Joe Skupniewitz.

REGRETS: Roberta Armstrong, Steve Campbell, Charlene Mason, Daniel Mooradian.

GUESTS: Executive Vice-President Robert Bruininks, Vice Provost Ann Hill Duin, Myron Lowe, Jigar Madia, David Nelson, Kevin Nicholson, Carolyn Parnell, Shih-Pau Yen, President Mark Yudof.

[In these minutes: 1. Discussion with President Yudof and Executive Vice-President Bruininks regarding "Digital University"]

Professor Gary Jahn welcomed new and returning members to the first meeting of the year and members introduced themselves. Professor Jahn then gave the URL for the committee's home page, www.umn.edu/usenate/committees/sccis.html, as well as the new e-mail address, scit@mailbox.mail.umn.edu. The membership list, current charge, and proposed charge were also distributed.

Professor Jahn said that the third item under point 4 of the short agenda, relating to the Supercomputer Institute, was removed, although it remains in the long form. This happened because an objection was raised by James Chelikowsky, who said that the agenda suggested that Supercomputing should undergo an external review. This occurred in February, and another is scheduled for December. Therefore, he did not feel that the committee should request a review at this time.

1.

President Yudof, Executive Vice President Bruininks, and Vice Provost Ann Hill Duin arrived and introductions were given.

Professor Jahn then gave a brief overview of how the discussion documents were formulated and went through the short agenda. He said that under the heading of teaching and research, the faculty concerns were what will need to be done to provide electronic curriculum and the student concerns were access to equipment and skills. Proposals were also included. For the faculty concerns, it included incentives - such as additional summer compensation or release time, and technical support for the faculty. Accomplishments have been made in this area with the addition of the Digital Media Center (DMC), but much more is needed.

President Yudof asked how much money was being spent in this area. The DMC budget is approximately \$500,000. At the college level, there is not a good all funds budget.

Executive Vice President Bruininks said that he learned much from reading this document, but repeatedly raised are the issues about the level of support as well as the lack of coordination among the resources and support that are now available. This suggests that partly it is a resource problem, but also a management coordination problem.

President Yudof suggested that the first step would be to look at the total resources and where they are being spent to see if they reflect the priorities of the faculty as well as other groups within the University. The data could be collected and then analyzed to see expenditure patterns.

Professor Jahn said that he would volunteer the services of the committee to undertake this project. Since being involved in the committee he has heard that there is a very large discrepancy between the amount spent for academic technology and administrative technology, but it is hard to separate one area from the other.

Executive Vice President Bruininks then said that the role of colleges and departments needs to be looked at to see what resources they have and how decentralized resources and support can be better integrated and coordinated with central resources and support. Everything cannot be centralized otherwise it will kill the spirit of innovation on campus, but redundancies need to be reduced. There are some central resources that can be allocated, but first a plan of action needs to be worked out this year.

A committee member said that departments and colleges feel lost as to what is their responsibility and what is the responsibility of central administration. Some clarification was given when the provostal areas were established, but nothing has been clarified since they were abolished.

Professor Jahn said that proposals to use the CLA Student Technology Fee to fund increased access to public computing labs were met with some resistance by those who felt that it was a central obligation to provide these services, therefore tuition and fees should not be raised to fund technology. The analogy was made between public computing labs and the library.

A committee member said that it would help colleges to know if the existing fee structure is going to be retained since it has been described as a temporary project since it needs yearly approval from the Board of Regents.

Executive Vice President Bruininks said that the general feeling from Board of Regents is that there needs to be protection for the students from the levying of enormous fees. However, there has been good support among students, faculty, and the Regents for the technology fee, within certain limits. It puts some pressure on the academic community to be very prudent in the investment of these dollars and to be accountable for how they are used.

Several students said that the students that they have talked to want fees to be kept in check and want to be able to see where their money is being spent. Those students who know about the fees process would see the value of levying a fee, but the majority of students, who are not aware of the process, can be upset when they see extra fees appearing in addition to tuition.

Executive Vice President Bruininks said that the position of the administration and the Regents in regards to fees is conservative. The University needs to be cost conscious and accountable. He then said that the agenda that the committee prepared should be one of the most important things that the administration addresses as a campus this year and will be a high priority for his office. He mentioned that there is some extremely creative work being developed for web-based instruction, but there is considerable need in terms of what kinds of instructional opportunities are needed for students and faculty. Another area on this agenda is what could be done to network the curricular offerings and make them accessible to students. His office is trying to do an analysis of the central resources that are available, but he also finds it difficult to separate academic and administrative technology. He then introduced Ann Hill-Duin, a newly appointed Vice Provost, and said that this will be a major part of her work this year. He suggested that a joint subcommittee be appointed to look at the resources and develop a strategic plan, since this committee contains the campus leaders in this area.

Professor Jahn said that there would be favorable sentiment from this committee to form a joint group.

Executive Vice President Bruininks said that one of the big issues that accompanies this explosion in technology is the lack of coordination. There are some evolving standards, but there is also a great deal of confusion from people who try and access the technology from the outside. New relationships will have to be made to deal with these issues and ideas will need to be pooled.

Professor Jahn said that the trick is how to increase organization without destroying decentralization. Another factor is that the target of technology is a moving target and it needs to be continually tracked. The creation of a central office was a step in the right direction, but there needs to be commitment beyond this first stage.

A committee member said that there is a structural problem with the fees committee since the things that the students want the most cannot be addressed by the colleges. Already in place is OIT and ADCS to control the labs. The fees committees then have to negotiate with these other organizations for improvement in services which they cannot guarantee. There needs to be a new structure in which there is representation from each of the college fee committees, OIT, and ADCS to solve these problems.

Shih-Pau Yen said that each college has decided on their own student fee and there is no uniform fee across campus. Therefore the student expectation is different in each college.

Don Riley added that Jim Infante made the decision to not impose a uniform University-wide fee. Then IT and CLA were allowed to levy their own fees to supplement central funding. A decision was made to go back and revisit the issue of fees, but this was never done. Students do not realize that this fee is not being paid to the University, but directly to a college.

Executive Vice President Bruininks concluded that the problem is deciding what is important to do, and what are the alternative ways that this can be accomplished. The University needs to step back and see if the direction is correct, if the proper infrastructure has been built, and develop a financial strategy to sustain the development and innovation that we need in the future. He believed that the University does not even have the right financing strategy to maintain the basic infrastructure.

The committee then thanked President Yudof, Executive Vice President Bruininks, and Ann Hill-Duin for attending.

Don Riley believed that this agenda could be broken into three areas:

- Curriculum and Faculty
- Support and Funding
- Decision-Making and Planning

He then suggested that several subcommittees be formed to deal with each of these areas, with participation from other areas of the University.

A committee member said that one area that needs to be dealt with is the tension between day school and University College. There is debate as to who will support development of web-based courses and what barriers emerge when people try to work across them. The subcommittee should identify structural and technological barriers and try to reduce them.

Don Riley said that he met yesterday with Hal Miller, Dean of University College, and Vice Provost Ann Hill-Duin to discuss these issues. Part of the difficulty is that we do not always understand what the vision is. For example, what is the University's vision of the role of a "distance learner"? Is it always separate or should it be part of a continuum? What fraction of enrollment does this affect? Is there a need that surpasses the enrollment? Until these types of questions are asked, the University does not know how to properly organize, fund, and invest.

Steve Cawley then said that this committee needs to capture the "as is" expenditure picture from OIT before moving ahead with solving other problems.

The committee decided that the agenda be put on the web and labeled as a working draft. A motion was then made to set up a Subcommittee on Planning at the chair's discretion, but with representation from OIT and the Executive Vice President's Office. It was unanimously approved by the committee.

Professor Jahn thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 2:30.

Rebecca Hippert
University Senate