

# IT Users Advisory Committee

## Minutes

March 31, 2009

3:00-4:00 p.m.

University Inn 507

### Present

Peter Adler, Franklin Bacheller, Scott Bates, Mark Damen, Charles Delaney, Michael Dietz, Bryce Fifield, Stacie Gomm, Janna Hawkins, Eric Hawley, Dennis Hinkamp, Jeremy Jennings, M. Kay Jeppesen, Jodi Morgan, Benjamin Renard-Wiart, Andrew Samaha, Joan Scheffke, Paul Schreuders, Jeff Sorensen, Nathan Smith, Eric Worthen

### Excused

Aaron Andersen, Lola Jean Bolton, Kirk Bostick, Sharyn Bradfield, Jacob Brown, Clint Bryant, Jim Dorward, Scott Ensign, Ning Fang, Nicholas Flann, Keith Gibson, Stephanie Hamblin, Alan Hashimoto, Laura Holley, George Hruby, Wes James, John Johnson, Justin Julander, Michelle Larson, Gordon May, Mac McKee, Conna Meeker, Nancy Mesner, Craig Miller, John Mortensen, Doug Nakken, Thorana Nelson, John Nicholson, Brian Nummer, Wallace Odd, Sydney Peterson, Scott Randall, Adrie Roberts, Cyndi Rowland, Josh Schultz, Elisa Taylor, Susan Turner, Amy Wilberg

### Guests

Bob Bayn, Steve Funk, Richard Jewkes, John Weeks

### Welcome

Eric Worthen welcomed new members, Jeff Sorenson and Stephanie Hamblin and thanked all for taking time to attend. Eric also apologized for the change with the meeting location on short notice.

### De-commissioning of VMS and cc.usu.edu

Eric Hawley noted that the VMS system has been in place since 1981. On May 15 the power will be turned off on VMS cluster. In November of 2008 email services on the VMS system were decommissioned. All of the cc.usu.edu email accounts which were requested to stay active have already been moved to the new system. Other services that were available on the VMS system will need to be removed by May 15. Presentations have been made to the Student Executive and Student Senate Committees. Web pages hosting services on cc.usu.edu will not be replaced. Those who desire to have their own personal web pages can utilize third party services. The Google aggregemail service has some limited capability to host some web pages. It is recommended that those requiring web pages for their courses should look to a third party for service. *IT* will post some of those that they feel will be most dependable and cost effective. ([IT.usu.edu/vms](http://IT.usu.edu/vms)). *IT* will also send out a post card to campus along with an article in the Statesman to remind all that VMS will be shut off on May 15.

Those who have been using VMS for data analysis and high performance computing should get in touch with Dr. Thomas Hauser, Director of High Performance Computing (HPC) at USU. The email alias system (nicknames) will be shifted to a new identity management system. Please contact the *IT* Service Desk and they can assist with any changes to usu.edu e-mail addresses in the meantime.

### **Central Email**

Eric Hawley stated that in USU's response to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities Accreditation Report recommendations, USU committed to have all faculty and staff active on a single central email system prior to fall of 2009. All faculty and staff should have an email account on the Aggies Exchange system by this date and department or unit email servers should be shut off. This commitment was made in September 2007 to be completed by September 2009. The conversion needs to be completed this summer and includes all active faculty and staff. There are approximately 20 departments that need to make the switch. There were initially 151.

### **Questions:**

- The question was asked if Cyndi Rowland's concerns had been addressed. Eric reported that they have visited and invited others to contact him personally they have concerns.

Eric Hawley emphasized the reasons for this recommendation was coordination of efforts, communication, security, and cost.

- Would it help to make a name change at this time? Wouldn't it be a benefit to have some kind of branding?

Eric Hawley felt it would be costly to change the name but branding efforts can be worked on.

- Are others having a difficult time transferring large files via email?

Eric Hawley pointed out that large files with graphics should be transferred via the website: <http://bft.usu.edu>. It was confirmed that USU's maximum message size limit is 30 MB and Eric thought that the Google/aggiemail limit is 20 MB. These numbers have been verified. Note that the limits are "message size limits" not necessarily attachment size limits – depending on the file and how it is packaged in the email, some files smaller than the limit drive the total message size above 30 MB resulting in a delivery error. Eric encouraged all to advertise to their faculty and staff that they should use bft.usu.edu to send large attachments. *IT* will also follow up with a post card distribution in the fall. Eric Worthen will email this information out to the committee membership.

There was concern that when one tries to send the 30 MB on Aggies, it is blocked off at 10 MB. This is no longer occurring. Eric asked individuals who continue to see such problems to contact the Service Desk or send an email to Allen Hill and he will look into it and see if he can

determine what is happening. It was noted that this problem had happened months ago and was fixed. As the bft.usu.edu system is configured to send files up to 1 GB, some discussion was had on how to transfer files over that size and various alternatives were briefly discussed.

Contact the Service Desk for assistance if you need to transfer files bigger than 1 GB. It was noted that FTP services will not continue to be maintained by *IT* due to security risks and maintenance costs. (FTP servers send usernames, passwords, and data unencrypted over the network).

- If going to a central email system are there chances of creating a central email for the entire state system of higher education, like Blackboard?

Eric Hawley said that he is willing to bring this possibility up at the next State CIO meeting. The state CIOs meet every other month with Steve Hess from the Commissioner's Office to talk about issues. This is something that certainly could be possible, but is not likely considering the budget problems the state is faced with.

For those familiar with the Breeze web conferencing system, concentration has been placed on developing alternate no-cost state sponsored alternative called "Wimba." More details will follow as the system is developed as a possible no-cost state sponsored alternative to Breeze.

- CPD has not yet moved to the central email system and suggested that one reason was concern over the delivery speed of the central email system.

Eric Hawley had not heard of any complaints regarding the email system's delivery or response times and has not had issues with his accounts. No others at the meeting indicated issues.

Timely delivery of email is very important and so he asked CPD to find a repeatable case and get in touch with him to troubleshoot when they see issues. (the system presently has over 4,000 faculty and staff accounts on the system with no delivery speed or performance issues having been reported).

- Have others noticed a slowdown in responsiveness of the email system when going through the university system like CPD has?

Eric was concerned as *IT* has not heard from other units. He wondered if CPD is seeing it at specific times. He asked that CPD get in touch with him and they will test to find a repeatable instance.

- Is there a storage size for emails that aren't thrown away?

Currently email storage of 500 MB is funded at no direct cost to units. At least 98% of the university's mailboxes are functioning at that level. For those that require larger mailboxes, the size can be increased to 2GB for only \$5/year. Eric noted that *IT* encourages archiving and is willing to discuss alternatives, or even larger mailbox sized in specialized cases. All university departments also have a certain amount of allocated file storage at no cost. This could be used to transfer files internally at no cost. If interested, contact the Service Desk.

- How does the *IT* email list service work?

*IT* offers this service free for sending emails to lists of users. *IT* can host at no charge but has no automated system that can populate or maintain the email lists. All must populate and maintain their own lists on the central email lists system. Please contact the IT Service Desk to get one set up and receive training.

### **IT Layoffs**

Vice President Jeppesen stated that he wanted all to know that we are all in this together and as the budget cuts have been issued *IT* has tried to continue providing with less. As *IT* looked at where cuts could be made they have looked at all of the positions within *IT* and determined their impact on the university. They addressed the issues of: (1) Is it critical to the objectives? (2) Is it needed or can it be put off, does it have time flexibility? (3) Is it nice to have but we won't fund right now. The *IT* Administration carefully went through the various functions within *IT* and identified functions and activities that we could do without. There were 27-28 individuals (roughly 20-25% of the 110 IT individuals) who took advantage of the early retirement incentive or were RIF'd. Some of these individuals had other opportunities they voluntarily wanted to pursue.

Vice President Jeppesen explained that revenue for *IT* is realized through state appropriated funds, some grants, transfer funds from UEN and service enterprise. *IT* is trying to meet the challenge of the budget reduction but maintain the *IT* needs of the campus. In some instances *IT* has received an increase with the service enterprise section as it is realized that *IT* can provide needs at a more economical rate. Vice President Jeppesen emphasized that *IT* will cooperate, and work, and leverage all it can to benefit campus wherever it can. *IT* is open to suggestions on how to meet needs at a cost that is less than experienced in the past.

### **IT Rate Structure (Data/Phone, Etc)**

Vice President Jeppesen noted that the billing is split to now reflect the data cost as well as the phone cost. He stated that this does not provide additional revenue to *IT*. If a phone is disconnected the charge for the phone service is discontinued but the \$19.50 for the data service would continue. Vice President Jeppesen confirmed that *IT* is in the process of getting a more equitable rate structure in place. With the budget situation it was necessary to do a band-aid emergency fix so the phone and data charges were separated. Vice President Jeppesen point out that 8-10 of our peer institutions are looking at a rate structure which would be more equitable where they will place a per person charge in place campus wide.

### **Questions:**

- In regard to research projects. As the project is received and started an activation fee is paid plus the monthly charge. Then the project is completed and there is not a user for an interim period waiting for the next project to begin. If the connection is deactivated, will there be another activation charge assessed when the next project begins? Is there a grace period within a certain time frame?

For the present, please contact Eric Hawley personally to get a network fee removed so that you

can discuss with him what has gone away and projected time of reactivation.

- Could *IT* communicate more openly with campus what each of the charges represent in regards to data and phone?

*IT* will have Kevin Reeve who is over marketing assist in making the campus community understand these costs. The phone bill indicates the type of phone and phone services provided. These charges cover approximately 40% of costs of *IT* services. *IT* services provided for campus are wire, wireless, email system, directory, security, etc. The 40% goes toward these services but does not cover all. Each can visit the *IT* website and print out the current rates.

- With reduction of 27-28 individuals within *IT* what changes can campus expect in services?

Vice President Jeppesen explained that with these changes in personnel it was high priority to structure *IT* so that there will be minimal impact. One service where the impact will be noticed is with our Media Production Team. The turnaround will be a little slower. Also VMS services are going away, and some services will not have as much backup support.

- With Michelle Smith leaving, who will negotiate the site licenses?

You can contact the Service Desk. Jennifer Fluckiger and Joni McNeeley will be taking the orders for software. Most of the software contracts are in the renewal process. Eric Hawley and Stacie Gomm will be monitoring and working on these contracts. USU will also be partnering with The State Board of Regents and CIOs on software contracts. They will also move to aggregate other licenses as possible.

### **Cooperative Management Policy**

Bob Bayn encouraged all to visit website [IT.usu.edu/policies](http://IT.usu.edu/policies) to review this specific policy one more time. He noted that there have not been too many changes since last discussion. There has been some tweaking of the wording to better represent and define institution-wide services and *IT*'s role to manage those. The Alumni System was provided as an example of a system that has institutional impact, but is NOT used by most units at USU and will therefore continue to be overseen by the Alumni Office (See the policy definition) *IT* is focused on managing systems that are broadly utilized by most of USU. For systems which are not as broadly used, *IT* would be happy to partner and host where desired or advantageous. Some small changes to the uniform wiring policy changes, primarily organizational names, were noted as well.

### **Question:**

- Can a unit provide their own wireless service? .

The policy states it must not duplicate the wireless service provided by USU and that it must not interfere with the provided service. This is a redundancy issue. If you have a special need please come talk with *IT*. *IT* encourages communication and wants to be of service.

With the economic crises the policy issues have not been placed on the agenda for approval by the VP Council or the Executive Council, but are scheduled for the immediate future. Vice President Jeppesen encouraged each to review the policies and give feedback to Eric Worthen, Eric Hawley, or Bob Bayn at their earliest convenience.

### **E-Commerce/Blackboard**

Stacie Gomm announced that E-commerce has been implemented and is working well. Rod's system has been disconnected. It is running on the new technology and it is working well.

#### **Questions:**

- What is the cost for the E-commerce services?

The setup fee through April is \$150.00. This fee will then increase to \$225.00. The monthly charge is \$20 with a 2% transaction fee. *IT's* goal is to recover costs, not turn it into a major profit center. These costs will be evaluated in a year and adjustments made at that time. If any units are doing transactions in the amount of \$9,000, please get in touch with Stacie.

- Is there a way to work with those on grant funding so the process can be streamlined? It is very difficult to determine how each should be charged. Is there a way to aggregate rather than try to separate say 35 grants? Can it be worked out in Banner? Is a flat rate possible?

Stacie stated this is hard to address but *IT* is willing to address these types of problems on a one/one basis.

- Will a shopping cart be available?

A shopping cart will hopefully be implemented. *IT* is working on setting this process up properly so the integration with Banner is transparent and smooth. It can be done but will take some time.

**Meeting Adjourned:** 4:18 p.m.

**Next Meeting:** May 19, 3:00 p.m., University Inn 507