

Academic Technology Committee

MINUTES OF MEETING: 09/04/09
Submitted Exec. Committee: _____
Submitted Academic Senate: _____

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE: 10/02/09
Approved by Exec. Committee: _____
Approved by Academic Senate: _____

Members Present: Hilary Baker, Shan Barkataki, Kimberly Embleton, Robert Lopez, Jacek Polewczak, Magdy Rizk, Mary Schaffer, Ashley Skylar (chair), Wayne Smith, Holli Tonyan, Jeff Wiegley.

Excused: Wei Cao

Absent: none

Guests: Steve Fitzgerald, David Levin, Pat Miller, Stephanie Nguyen, Chris Olsen, Paul Schantz, Steven Stepanek, Diane Stephens, Chris Xanthos.

Minutes: Jennifer De Iuliis

1) Welcome and Introductions

- a. Ashley Skylar, chair
Members present stated their names and colleges/departments they are representing.

- b. Steven Stepanek, ATC liaison representative from Faculty Senate Executive Committee
In his role as ATC liaison, Stepanek read the mission statement and responsibilities of the committee membership. Stepanek noted joint ATC/ERC meetings would continue to take place if the committees have an interest in them. He mentioned that members have a responsibility to provide awareness, share information with colleagues and attend the monthly meetings. Members must inform the chair and the Faculty Senate office if they are unable to fulfill their duties as a committee member. Jennifer Matos will be sending out communication shortly regarding a call for membership for the next fiscal year. Stepanek advised members whose terms are going to expire to consider soon whether they wish to be considered for another term.

Stepanek outlined the various policies which the ATC may review, vote on, write and submit opinions. Two types of policies exist: faculty generated and university policies. Faculty generated policies are voted on by the committee and then sent to the Faculty Senate for adoption consideration. University policies (affecting all groups on campus) come to the ATC committee for advisory purposes and there is no vote by ATC. University policies are vetted through the university governance process. Stepanek encouraged the committee to be more proactive in areas which are faculty and student related, via writing white papers or other documents.

Polewczak asked who he should contact if he needs more information regarding academic computing topics. Stepanek explained that any academic computing related

issues and suggestions should be sent to Spero Bowman's attention. Stepanek recommended that members who are interested in knowing more details about what the IT division is working on or wishing to discuss meeting topics in more in depth should contact Hilary Baker and their faculty chair directly.

Lopez shared he will be on military leave beginning 2010. Stepanek, Skylar, and other members encouraged him to remain on the committee for the semester, at which time he will have the option to request a temporary leave (one semester) or resign and a replacement will be elected by the college to fulfill the remainder of his appointed term.

2) Announcements – none

- 3) Approval of Minutes –** The minutes of the 05/01/09 were reviewed and discussed. Polewczak mentioned that he had some edits for the web environment section. He also requested that Baker provide him with full Shell access to the web server and offered to explain to the committee what this access means which he is requesting. Stepanek suggested Polewczak write some text for the meeting minutes for the committee to review. Polewczak agreed to write some text. The committee will vote on approval of the minutes at the next meeting in October.

Annual Reports –

Handout titled – ATC 2008-2009 Annual Report to the CSUN Faculty Senate

Handout titled – ATC 2007-2008 Annual Report to the CSUN Faculty Senate

Handout titled – ATC 2006-2007 Annual Report to the CSUN Faculty Senate

Skylar asked if members had reviewed the reports which were written and sent out via email by the previous chair, Ellis Godard. A few minor edits were identified. Skylar will provide corrections and request that Godard update the documents.

4) Previous Meeting Action Item Review – none

5) Chair's Report

- a. ACAT Report – Skylar was unable to attend, and asked Levin to provide an update. Levin stated the meetings main topic was Moodle which is scheduled later on the meeting agenda.
- b. Meeting schedule FY09-10 – Skylar requested that members please review the ATC meeting schedule as listed on the agenda and notify her of any schedule conflicts in advance (especially considering the furloughs which are in place this year). She noted that if it appears a member will have ongoing conflicts, it would be best to have a replacement appointed.

Skylar asked members to provide her with any suggestions for meeting topics. Polewczak recommends having Moodle as a standing item on the ATC agenda and encouraged the committee members participate more directly in the Moodle project. Shan recommended having the Thin Client topic on future agendas. As others have ideas, Skylar asked that they send her an email.

- c. Information Security awareness training – Skylar offered a reminder for committee members to complete the CSU online, self-paced training course which she found very informative. Skylar showed the committee the certificate of completion she received following the completion of the course.

6) CIO's Report

Baker introduced guests from IT leadership present at the meeting: Chris Olsen, newly appointed Senior Director of Infrastructure Services/Information Security and Chris Xanthos, Senior Director of Project Management and Application Development.

Handout titled - What's New in IT, Fall 2009

- a. Wireless network – All existing indoor and outdoor wireless access devices have been replaced and new areas were added that did not previously have wireless coverage. Additionally, devices were added to enhance coverage in some areas where there had been poor reception. The wireless coverage on campus will continue to be enhanced via the Campus Quality Fee. Some additional outside areas and parking will be included. WPA2 is currently in testing and Baker hopes some committee members may choose to participate in this testing. Tonyan asked about WPA2. Wiegley explained that the process of re-entering your user name and password each time you return to campus to access wireless would be eliminated once WPA2 is implemented. Polewczak asked how often users will be required to re-authenticate once WPA2 is installed. Olsen explained that for WPA2 users, re-authentication will be required only when a user changes their password.
- b. Web infrastructure – Baker noted that the new web environment was implemented last May. Polewczak requested that Baker to provide him with Shell access to the server. Baker stated they have discussed this previously and for security reasons, the access he is requesting has not been provided. Baker and Polewczak agreed to set up a meeting to discuss this further.
- c. Faculty and student email migrations – Later this semester, student email will migrate to Gmail. There have been advertisements in the Daily Sundial announcing the student email migration which will begin on September 25, 2009. The faculty email migration to Exchange will occur in November 2009. Broadcast emails will be sent to both groups providing further details on each of the email migrations.
- d. Web infrastructure - Polewczak revisited the web topic and noted that a small percentage of users (maybe 20%) need the ability to have SSH access to the server. He noted that he has asked Chris Xanthos and Kate Sharron about this issue and the response was that they were working on it. Per Polewczak, this should only take about 3 weeks, but it has been much longer. He noted that working with PHP can prove cumbersome and there are alternatives. Baker recommended an offline meeting with Polewczak to discuss further.
- e. Wiegley mentioned his concerns about lack of IT responsiveness, because he had previously asked about Unix mapping and Xanthos agreed to update the web content to include these details, however he could not find the information on the web. Xanthos stated that the content was updated within a few days of the last ATC meeting and offered to send Wiegley the direct web URL. Wiegley noted that the information about

Unix users should have been incorporated in the web documentation to avoid leaving out any group, even the small percentage of Unix users.

f. IT Summary for the start of the fall 2009 semester

Baker discussed fall 2009 technology issues including the power outage on the first day of class which affected wireless and other technology services. She also noted there had been some Moodle username logon confusion for students which has been mitigated in the short term by adding the “Find your User Name” to the Moodle home page. There were also some Moodle server load issues which should be resolved because MoodleRooms, our CSU server hosting vendor for Moodle, has added new servers. Baker requested feedback if ATC members experience issues.

g. Technology cost saving strategies

Baker noted that she is looking for cost saving strategies across the university. She noted that President Koester also mentioned this at the open forums held over the past week. Baker stated that she and other CSU campuses are looking at some projects to share IT resources through collaborative efforts. One example is a pilot for virtual computer labs, modeled after North Carolina State. Baker will be sending out communications in the next month or two to request faculty and student participation in this pilot project. Polewczak expressed interest in participating.

Schaffer shared that she learned through a sales representative meeting that the cost for some software licensing varies throughout campus and would like to know what, if any policies and procedures exist to acquire software for the campus. Additionally, she stated her college has a tracking program, which has been very useful. Spero Bowman is scheduled to attend the October ATC to discuss the Academic Affairs budget; Baker noted she will pass Schaffer’s comments about software licensing to Bowman.

Baker asked members to send technology cost saving ideas and suggestions to her via email.

7) Department/College Issues

Class rosters - Smith stated a faculty member was concerned about the class roster being slow (approximately 4 ½ minutes) but that his check earlier in the meeting showed a faster time. He mentioned that the slow class roster issue was also raised during the previous year.

Polewczak asked members how to make the font size larger on the class rosters. Shan and Smith shared that the roster can be imported into any other type of file formats (e.g. Microsoft Excel or Adobe PDF) and once imported, the font size can be increased.

PHP - Rizk noted that one of his faculty members had a PHP issue but that he had already provided the information.

Committee participation - Lopez asked for clarification regarding his role on the committee whether he represents the English Department or College of Humanities. Skylar explained that his role on the committee is representing the college. She suggested that he and any other committee members could send an email introducing themselves to the college, describing their role on ATC and encouraging colleagues to send feedback on technology/concerns to their attention so it could be shared at monthly ATC meetings

Class Lists - Schaffer experienced difficulties with the 50 email message limit when sending to class lists in courses she is teaching over 125 students. Baker explained there are two ways to send out messages: one has the 50 limit and the other is unlimited. Baker mentioned that the information can be found on the Academic Technology web site and the SOLAR Support web site and that she will send the web link to the committee. Olsen stated the 50 message limit is when the messages are sent through SOLAR.

Student email bounced messages - Lopez questioned the frequent bounce back messages which indicate the student's mail box is full. Xanthos explained this is due to student email boxes reaching their quota. When the students move to Gmail, their email quota will be much higher and these messages will become infrequent.

Help Desk – Embleton expressed thanks for the service which is being provided and shared that she often sends students to the IT walk in center and they have had good experiences.

8) Discussion Topics

a. Moodle Update (David Levin)

Handout titled – Moodle Report for ATC, September 4, 2009

Levin shared that the current usage of Moodle is one quarter that of WebCT. The goal is to have all WebCT classes moved into the new environment by the end of this academic year. Extended Learning is using the Blackboard LMS and a separate migration plan is being developed by Extended Learning to migrate Blackboard courses to Moodle.

A tool will be made available for faculty to use to move content from WebCT into Moodle. While helpful, Levin shared that it does not migrate everything as it exactly appears from one environment to the other. Faculty will need to make some edits to their content and assistance is available for individuals as needed.

Levin noted that he is working with the library to help faculty decide when it will be helpful to migrate their LMS information into the Library's learning object repository in addition to Moodle. The learning object repository is part of the Library's CSUN Scholar Works. A future phase of the Moodle implementation will have an imbedded librarian feature. Faculty have expressed an interest in having librarians assist with their courses and this feature would be a tool to link the content with the course.

Levin stated that over the summer about 100 faculty were trained and are currently using Moodle for approximately 275 sections. The university has contracted with Lynda.com to provide online self-paced training for Moodle.

The Faculty Technology Center is currently offering workshops in a number of departments for special Moodle training sessions. Levin stated that these specially scheduled workshops are for groups larger than five people. He encouraged others to attend the open sessions. Interested faculty can register for workshops on the Academic Technology website.

Polewczak asked what additional features and modules will be available for Moodle, specifically the mathematical equations that he presented with Carol Shubin last October.

Levin stated that we will be developing a process for requesting, testing, and adding such features to the Moodle environment but that he and his staff are focused on migrating WebCT users this year, largely using Moodle “out of the box”. To move along with the agenda, Skylar suggested Polewczak send Levin an email to discuss details further.

b. Thin Client Report (Steve Fitzgerald, Stephanie Nguyen, Diane Stephens)

Handout titled – Report of Thin-Client Feasibility Study (outline)

Handout titled – Thin-Client Feasibility Study, July 2009

Fitzgerald presented background information regarding the Thin-Client Feasibility Study, as well as information from Classroom Technology Survey that influenced the Study. The Classroom Technology Survey, conducted in the spring 2009, noted that the faculty had three main concerns, which were to have a stable/reliable environment, simplified technology, and to receive specialized support. As an outgrowth of the Survey, the Classroom Technology Committee formed a subgroup, that was charged Provost to conduct the Thin Client feasibility study. A thin client relies more heavily on the server-side technology rather than the desktop computer. In the simplest form, a thin client relies on all of its data and applications to be reside on a server. This helps to leverage existing IT services to eliminate viruses, and to ease troubleshooting. Other CSU campuses have looked into the thin client technology for use in a variety of settings, but several are looking into labs as an initial rollout of thin clients. Cal State Northridge is reviewing the technology for use in lecture style classrooms, especially open classrooms.

Wiegley stated having a homogenous system would be ideal. Barkataki shared that he uses a tablet PC and white board and would like to see integration. Tonyan suggested having workstations readily available in an open, usable space for faculty to check presentations before class. Stephens stated this input is helpful and would like members to send her additional feedback via email. Schaffer shared that some of the equipment in classrooms is on opposite walls and some concerns around the lighting as well as a request for white boards. Stephens will follow up on these concerns and requested Schaffer send an email with the room locations.

Stephens encouraged the committee to contact her directly on any other classroom concerns. Miller expressed her appreciation to the group for conducting the study and especially Nguyen’s work on the report; although she has some concerns around possible network bandwidth issues. She also raised the issue with data projectors, which often shine into instructor’s eyes. Tonyan suggested that it would be helpful to include a definition of the terminology thin client and image as used in the report.

Stephens explained the next phase would be to move forward with a pilot, provided they receive recommendations to do so. Skylar asked about the impact of the pilot on the network. Fitzgerald stated that the assumptions are that the network and power is always available. Fitzgerald also relayed the concerns he has heard from faculty about concerns regarding the network stability and performance, for example vis-à-vis the Classroom Technology survey. Baker noted that there are no planned changes to the current network environment. Fitzgerald noted that the thin client testing encountered some networking problems and that feedback has been provided to the IT staff for review.

Stephens requested support and recommendation of ATC to move forward with the test pilot. Wiegley inquired about funding availability for the pilot. Stephens shared that some funding is available in Academic Affairs and but that we still need to look into IT support and possible additional funding. Wiegley motioned to endorse the thin-client feasibility study and its recommendations. Schaffer seconded. Barkataki expressed the need for some specific objectives of the pilot project that also included an assessment component. All members were in favor of the pilot project. The motion was passed by the committee.

9) Policy - none

10) New Business - none

11) Concluding Remarks

Skylar asked members to consider some sub-groups within the committee or utilizing Google docs for ways to inform and share information. Tonyan suggested setting up a Moodle community. Skylar noted some members are not present and she would ask them if they use Moodle. Shan suggested having known problems available in one place would be particularly helpful for students. Skylar will send an email to the ATC group. She mentioned that sub-group ideas could include the topics discussed today including Moodle and Thin Client.

12) FY09-10 Meetings

September 4, 2009

October 2, 2009

November 6, 2009

December 4, 2009

January – no meeting

February 5, 2010

March 5, 2010

April 2, 2010

May 7, 2010

Meeting adjourned at 3:08 PM.