

MINUTES
Faculty Senate Committee on Technology
9/6/2011

Convened in Union 213 at 3:30 PM

Attending - Bormann, Brooks-Kiefer, Crawford, Fees, Grinter, Pahwa, J. Hornsby (proxy for M. Raine), Rintoul, Stafford, Stadtlander. Visitors: Harv Townsend, Jeff Morris

- 1) An update on the web design and content management system initiatives - Jeff Morris outlined the process to date. Thirteen updated websites already on line and 16 more ready sometime this month. Thirty-two more are actively in the queue for deployment in the near future. He passed out some informational material showing screen captures of these sites. He noted that there is more demand than capacity, and that the focus so far has been to try to help units where web development expertise and manpower was limited. The new CMS (content management system) seems to be robust, with no significant technical issues so far. Feedback on the extant sites has focused primarily on questions of ADA compatibility; these are being addressed. Other questions and fixes are also being addressed, including support for mobile devices, area-specific search capability, etc.

Question asked about faculty web pages and their place in the new scheme: There is no plan to enforce any new standards at the level of faculty web pages; those can still be maintained by the faculty members however they want. The focus is at the unit level, so even websites for student groups are not on the radar screen now.

Question asked about training – iTAC will do training, and some other folks from Jeff’s office will also be tasked with this in the near future.

Question asked about statement, heard at one of the early training meetings, that web design templates for other units will not be made available to anyone else. Jeff stated that this statement was made, but it was in error. Since web design, not content, is where most units need the most help, templates will be made available upon request.

- 2) Blocking remote access to university computers – Harv Townsend. Decision has been made to block direct remote access to on-campus computers via two protocols, RDP (Windows Remote Desktop) and SSH (Secure shell). These protocols are targets of attack by hackers who want to take over computers for spam or file-sharing servers. Lack of strong passwords (or, in some cases, complete lack of password-level security) on computers that are remotely controlled, using these protocols, by faculty or staff members means that they can be easy to hack. These users will soon be required to use the VPN (Virtual Private Network) provided by the university. This system requires the KSU userid and associated strong password, allowing security that cannot be obtained in situations where password security cannot be policed or enforced. KSU IT policies require strong passwords; this is the only way to enforce that requirement.

Question asked about lack of speed and bugginess of the VPN system. Harv told us that this was in the old VPN, and that the new one is robust and fast. So the requirement to use this system will only add one step (logging into the VPN), RDP and SSH connections can then be used from within the VPN framework.

Question asked about timeline – the new firewall and servers will be installed at the end of the fall 2011 semester.

- 3) A discussion of the involvement of Varney's Bookstore in the information-seeking and record-keeping aspects of textbook requests. There have been several issues that have arisen with faculty members who actually did submit textbook information on time, and somehow that information never made it into the proper slots on iSIS. How can this system be better integrated with iSIS?

Requests were made to make the system more efficient. Loss of data (see above) is a problem. Requirement for using the system just to report "no book" seems inefficient; perhaps this information could be sought with the line schedule information and kept in a permanent database so that it would not be necessary to do this every semester. The history of Varney's involvement in this was rehashed. Unfunded federal mandate to include book requirements in information available to students at enrollment was given on a very short time frame. A Varney's system was in place and could be modified for this purpose relatively easily. So rather than build an in-house system, the decision was made to piggyback onto the Varney's system. But it might be time to investigate bringing this in-house, to ensure response to complaints, and to ensure communication to the iSIS database is enhanced. Since some faculty members do not use Varney's, but do use other bookstores for their textbook orders, this would be better for those faculty members as well.

- 4) Agenda items for future meetings include discussion of the use of e-books in class and during exams, an update on the transition to the new wireless network for campus, and a report on the pilot program that addressed the advantages & disadvantages of allowing faculty investigators to access their grant accounting information.

Meeting adjourned @ 4:45 PM. – David A. Rintoul, chair and secretary