

ANNUAL REPORT
of the
**UNIVERSITY COMPUTER AND ELECTRONIC
COMMUNICATIONS
COMMITTEE**
Presented to the
The Faculty Senate
September 9, 2004

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Annual Report of The University Computer and Electronic Communications Committee

Agenda, minutes and special reports of the FSUCECC are available on-line at the committee website, URL: <http://people.umass.edu/fsucecc/>.

The FSUCECC held six regular meetings and one ad hoc meeting during the fall and spring of 2003-2004.

Agenda items that occupied the committee included:

1) Oversight of the implementation of the SIS Liaison Levels I-III.

As part of **Sen. Doc. No. 03-021** Special Report of the FSUCECC (March 3, 2003), which recommended establishment of an SIS Liaison Group, the FSUCECC was given oversight responsibility over the implementation of the Liaison Group I-III Structure. The FSUCECC noted the lack of implementation of the recommended tripartite structure and operation of the SIS Liaison Group. Though members of a nominal Level I Group were chosen by summer 2003, no meeting of a Liaison Group occurred until Oct 21, 2003, seven months after its formation was mandated. No overall strong organization is perceived to have coalesced despite the Provost's appointment of leadership. The nominal Level I group was assembled and met several times but its operation was perceived by the FSUCECC to be closer to the proposed Level II structure, charged to assemble and order priorities of perceived unsolved problems. This was important work but was not envisioned as Level I activity. No passage of this ordering of problems to a true Level I, Administrative Decision Level structure is known to have occurred. No Level I oversight was possible since there is no true Level I SIS Liaison group to this day issuing high priority decisions. No Level III, drop in, help structure was perceived to exist unless it was the existing OIT Helpdesk or workshops offered by OIT on what to expect with the new PeopleSoft SIS implementation. In the existing SIS Liaison Panel (nominally Level I), problems are suggested by the members, discussed and assembled into a list. There is no apparent mechanism for comprehensive collection of problems from University wide Departments not represented in the panel's membership. The Registrar, a member of this Level I working group was quoted as having said that one could easily double the size of the problem list by adding Registrar issues. One argument offered to explain why solutions would not be pursued: We should wait until Version 8 of PeopleSoft SIS software is implemented because it will solve some of the problems (and create new ones). How big is our problem and is it any worse than at other Universities?

Now that we have a new implementation, PeopleSoft SIS Ver. 8, and a fresh set of problems, the solution path must be made transparent to the users of SIS. The users of SIS must see problems progressing (or not) through a methodical path to solution. We need a record of the problem solution process to see if the cycle fits within the PeopleSoft Version cycle. A problem-ticketing-database would provide a central focus, about which the three Liaison Group levels can function.

MOVED: An online problem-ticketing-database be expeditiously established that will allow SIS problem stakeholders to see ticketed problems and follow the progress of processing and solving of submitted problems.

2) Review of the implementation of PeopleSoft 8.

The implementation of Peoplesoft SIS Version 8 was explained to the committee by John Dubach in a regular Spring 2004 FSUCECC meeting and an ad hoc workshop provided by SIS staff.

Through discussion with Chief Information Officer John Dubach and President Jack Wilson it was revealed in May 2004 that the PeopleSoft SIS Software is completely separable from the HR/Financials Software, only the latter was mandated to be used system-wide by the Presidents Office, and was “beyond question”. The President is satisfied with the HR/Financials product. The PeopleSoft SIS software is a new product, in a relatively crude stage of development and thus upgrades will be coming in rapid fashion with expected introduction of novel or recurring problems. If this PeopleSoft product does not stabilize, as needed, we may need to consider another product. President Wilson suggested that there might be better products on the market. An independent criterion-of-satisfaction with the PeopleSoft product needs to be established based on national standards.

MOVED: A Committee to explore the success of other brand SIS systems implemented at sister institutions be established by the Provost to provide a comparative basis for deciding if PeopleSoft SIS is providing satisfactory service.

3) Portal Strategies.

The design of a University Wide Portal System, a President’s Office Initiative, was presented by John Dubach as a possible future consideration that would provide a platform for more organized data transfer and access security.

4) University Printing Policy

A crisis in printing costs is being experienced by many University units (Library, OIT, Academic Departments) because of the unprecedented success of online courses and course web pages with resource links and downloadable course materials. Students are reluctant to read digital copies and seek places to obtain free printouts. Several University departments and units shared their experience and strategy discussions about how this crisis is to be met.

OIT will enforce its old rule, which had not previously been rigidly enforced, that students would only be able to print their own personal work. Several departments are instituting per student quotas on courses for printing. Other units may institute UCard approaches to purchasing printing. It is clear that this crisis partially represents a shift from lower cost batch printing of handouts and student purchasing of textual material toward digital warehousing of course materials, something we could have anticipated. The burden of cost needs to be shared in an equitable way to ensure the learning-experience benefits and the cost is not an impossible burden on any one participant. Students may be asked to resume the tradition of paying for the convenience of having printed textual material. Such pressure may lead to graduating to a true digital university.

5) University Email-List Policy

The committee has not resolved the Email List Policy that has been on our agenda for 4 years. We are intent on discussing this knotty problem in the coming years agenda.

Respectfully submitted September 9, 2004
Joseph G. Kunkel, '03-'04 Chairperson of FSUCECC