

INFORMATION RESOURCES COUNCIL

Minutes

December 8, 2009

Present: Jennifer Bonner, Ruth Copans, Beth Dupont, Deb Hall, Ann Henderson, Susan Kress (Chair), Andrew Lichtenberg, Michelle Paquette, Laura Paul, Justin Sipher

Absent: Mike West

Guests: Robin Adams, Sharon Arpey, Jeff Beachy, Tammy Blair, Dung-Lan Chen, Jeff Clark, Mary Cogan, Bill Duffy, Tom Harfmann, Mark Huibregtse, Denise Jenks, Wendy Kercull, Mary Lynn, Terri Mariani, Tom Marcotte, Brien Muller, Bob Royce

Chair Susan Kress opened the meeting at 2:03 p.m. by welcoming everyone.

Approval of Minutes

Susan asked whether there were any changes to the minutes of the meeting held on November 24, 2009. Hearing none, she announced that the minutes were approved.

College E-mail and Calendar Services

Justin Sipher gave a PowerPoint presentation on proposed changes to Skidmore's email and calendar services.

- The community's expectations of the services provided by IT with respect to email and calendar services will continue to increase; however, the resources available to provide support will not continue to grow as they have in the past.
- IT needs to look at what services are critical to be managed and supported locally and what services are not.
- Challenges faced by IT with respect to email services include not only delivery but storage demands; email growth (volume, availability, complexity and access) leads to higher resource costs.
- IT must review the "value" of Skidmore's owning, operating and managing email communications; in today's world, most students come to college with an established email account and many people have more than one email account.
- Options for IT to consider are as follows:
 - Continue to own, operate and manage email communications: invest in hardware to manage email services, increase storage, and spend \$100k annually to support email architecture;
 - Contract management/hosting with either Google or Microsoft; or
 - Provide no email service at all and allow individuals to use their own personal e-mail accounts for all their communications.

- Several of our peer institutions (Colgate, Hamilton and Oberlin) have moved (or are in the process of moving) to outsource their email services; in 2008, in a survey of 4-year colleges, 40 percent said they are converting to, or already have converted to, outsourcing their student email; one-quarter said they are reviewing their options and one-third said they have no plans at this time.
- There is no cost to the institution if we outsource email and calendar services to services such as Microsoft Live@edu or Google Apps for Education.
- The benefit realized by Google or Microsoft by providing email and calendar services at no cost to institutions is future advertising; these companies hope that students have a positive experience and that they maintain their accounts for personal future use after graduating from the college.
- In reviewing options, IRC hosted an information session in the spring, 2009; thereafter, prior to any contractual negotiation, legal counsel reviewed both the Google and Microsoft contracts to ensure compliance with FERPA and e-discovery requirements.
- In spring, 2009, an email was sent to the community seeking volunteers to test the email systems: 86 faculty, staff and students came forward as volunteers. After a test period, a survey was sent to the volunteers; of the 20 respondents, one-third preferred Google, one-third preferred Microsoft and one-third thought either service was sufficient for their needs.
- While both options could work and are working at other institutions, IT believes that Microsoft has a more robust offering (institutional support as well as compatibility across computers, browsers and handhelds). IT's recommendation to the administration is to convert email services to Microsoft's Live@edu services.
- The transition to Microsoft Live@edu email can be done over the course of a semester; after the switch to email has been made, the current Oracle Calendar will be converted all at once.
- The initial contract is for 3 years but can be terminated at any time since there is no money involved and Skidmore continues to own the data. The contract will continue until it is no longer convenient.
- User names will stay the same ending with "@skidmore.edu"
- Upon graduation, Skidmore will be able to ask students if they wish to continue their email account; if so, their account will be moved from Skidmore to Microsoft's free services and, at that time, students will begin to receive ads from Microsoft.
- The move to Microsoft to host email and calendar services will provide greater capacity in IT to focus on other new initiatives.

Susan thanked Justin for his presentation and concluded the meeting at 3:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra L. Peterson
Executive Administrative Assistant