Office of Information Technology
Faculty Advisory Committee Meeting
April 7, 2011

Attendees: Bruce Blumberg, John Clarke, Bill Cohen, Stephen Franklin, Alan Goldin, Carol Hughes, Antoinette LaFarge, Jim Meeker, Keith Moore, Jim Murry, Hugh Roberts, Dana Roode, Shivendu Shivendu, Jason Valdry, Ted Wright, Albert Yee, Nyma Cain- Admin Support

OIT Windows Breach (Dana Roode)

In late February, MS-Windows computers run by OIT were logged into by hackers based in Brazil. The hackers obtained hashed passwords for approximately 5,000 user and process accounts. The computers accessed serve key parts of the campus including A&BS, University Advancement, Office of Research, the Graduate Division, and others.
- OIT Security blocked the hackers before more serious damage could be done.
- A large amount of OIT staff time has been spent on responding to this incident – changing passwords, security corrections, reviewing logs, etc.
- Follow up is ongoing; an outside Windows forensics team OIT brought in to help is wrapping up their analysis. Thus far, every indication is that no sensitive information was compromised other than passwords which have all been changed since the intrusion was discovered.

Budget (Dana Roode)

UCI expects a budget cut of at least $50 million. Like everyone else, OIT will be impacted by this cut. The UCI Budget Workgroup and others are currently considering options, and OIT is planning accordingly.

Academic Unit IT Workgroup Report (Dana Roode, John Clarke, Jim Meeker, Jason Valdry)

Representatives from the Academic Unit IT Workgroup participated in the meeting to answer questions and to gather feedback regarding its conclusions.

Important initial observations shared about the report:
- The report does not represent a yes/no proposition, but rather a menu of options for IT integration to be considered individually for potential adoption.
- The report does not propose any timeframe; what is proposed could take multiple years to implement. The expectation is that items indentified for adoption will be prioritized and implemented incrementally over time.
- The Workgroup acknowledged that each academic unit has very important, unique needs that will continue to require dedicated staffing to support – many IT needs are not sharable.

- The group's goal was to identify what could be shared and what organizational relations and other mechanisms are required for effective sharing.

Specific points raised during the Committee's discussion are outlined below together with feedback provided by Workgroup and Committee members.

Section 3 – What Should be Shared

Use of standardized desktop platforms may be an issue with faculty due to their specialized research needs.

> The Workgroup saw standardized platforms as a better fit for staff than for faculty, but faculty should have the option of considering them. Both Mac and Windows PC options should be available; we should also consider desktop "thin-clients" which lower support costs by off-loading storage and processing needs to central servers that are easier and less expensive to support.

How would standard desktops be managed to reduce costs?

> UC Strategic Sourcing is working on system-wide procurement contracts that could lower costs, but the main benefit will come from the reduced support requirements that standardized configurations allow. Standards should include the use of high quality components to reduce the impact of failures to end-users and IT support staff.

Ramping up the use of shared services as proposed in the report will require that business be done the same way across schools.

> The need to do things the same way, or closer to the same way, is essential. A significant current example of this is the system-wide Payroll Personnel System (PPS) replacement initiative to implement uniform payroll and HR procedures throughout UC. Academic units will benefit from a uniform way of conducting business as it facilitates integrating IT functions and frees time for local IT staff to focus on specialized unit needs.

The workgroup report is written at a high level, and if everything is seamlessly integrated eventually, then it is all good. However, as one committee member commented, "The devil is in the details." Once specific actions are fleshed out, issues may arise.

> This is an important point – the Workgroup report presents a direction to head, but there is much to work out. Things that work well in IT are typically implemented incrementally over time, with adjustments made as needed, based on experiences along the way.

How will priorities in IT service integration be determined? Will they be based on what actions are expected to have the greatest benefit, or on what is easiest to complete?

> Prioritization will have to be based on a combination of the two. There are significant challenges on staff time and maintaining "business as normal" is paramount, we can't stop what we are doing to integrate services. We'll want to start with the "lowest hanging fruit" -- achievable items with significant value.

What is consuming faculty time that can be improved by the Workgroup's proposal?
> Faculty spend time as participants in processes that can be streamlined through automation using software applications. Replacing redundant activities through shared services will free local IT staff time to provide more support of faculty and specialized needs of the schools. Talk of "IT efficiencies" is more about using IT to achieve institutional efficiencies than it is about IT operations themselves.

An example of a place to start might be local financial "shadow systems" that units have in place to manage local operations. In preparation for a future new financial system, perhaps units can work together to use common local systems.
> The Financial Systems replacement project has begun and has recently issued a survey of shadow systems to determine what schools are using. This project will consider both central and unit needs with a goal of minimizing units' requirements for local shadow systems.

Given that virtually all students have their own computers these days, and often laptops that they can bring on campus, is there still a need for Instructional Computing Labs?
> The requirement for central "drop in" labs seems to have declined, although usage of public computers in the Libraries by students remains very high. Schedulable labs that can be used for class sessions remains very important. Instruction can require students have the same environment including requisite class software packages. Some software is expensive; labs ensure access to the same software version for all students. Unique research tools and software are also used in local labs.

Section 4 – Organizational Structure and Ties

Is the "dotted-line" reporting concept based on a model in place elsewhere, and do we have data about how well it works?
> Purdue and other institutions are using it, but we do not have good information about how well it is working. As a part of administrative IT consolidation, dotted-line reporting has been put in place between OIT support groups and management in the units they support. Thus far it seems to be working well, with units making business decisions and providing functional direction, and IT providing technical expertise and direction.

The proposal seems to add an extra layer of management, shouldn't we be doing what corporate America learned to do a long time ago and remove unnecessary layers?
> It would be interesting to know how many direct reports managers in industry tend to have in professional environments, as having too many tends to limit the value of management participation. An important distinction at UCI is that virtually all IT managers, especially those in academic units, are extremely hands on. Management activities occupy only a fraction of their time; the rest is spent, like those they supervise, supporting the academic units' IT activities and needs.

The proposed organizational approach is good. The process will need to be evaluated over the course of time and adjustments made as needed.

There is a concern in some units that the proposed IT integration and dual-reporting relationship will interfere with current support activities including those focused on research computing. Meetings and other coordination activities will also take time away from unit support needs. What sort of ongoing impact is expected?

> There will certainly be an impact, as unit IT staff time helps guide and implement shared services. We will have to move carefully to minimize this impact. IT service integration is a long-term process that will take time to work through. The long-term goal is to free local staff time to focus on research and other unit-specific activities by minimizing the time they spend on routine, "commodity" IT activities. The dual-reporting is intended as a two-way conduit between schools and the rest of the campus – a "seat at the table" with school IT directors serving as liaisons to OIT and campus IT efforts.

The academic unit IT directors have met regularly for many years and in January the frequency was increased to monthly and the format was adjusted. OIT Director Allen Schiano chairs the meetings and works with the group and OIT colleagues to set the agenda. Academic units have found the meetings to be a real benefit as they allow issues to be aired and all participants to learn about solutions and activities across campus. It is also a good conduit between academic units and OIT. There is more of an impact when multiple units share common issues and work with OIT to address an issue than when an issue or request involves only one unit.

What are the planned costs to the schools?

> This requires more analysis and discussion. Recharging for services can discourage their use and should be avoided when possible.

Health Affairs Information Services has a dual-reporting relationship with some departmental IT staff and has found that to be a helpful arrangement. Health Affairs has also saved significant money through the virtualization of discrete servers, as is proposed in section 3.3 of the Workgroup report. In addition, the increasing demand for image storage is leading Health Affairs to look more and more to using storage provided through "cloud services."

University Sponsored Third Party Email (Steve Franklin)

The committee reviewed recommendations of the Email Risk Assessment Workgroup which was established to determine the level of risk presented by campus faculty and staff using third party (off-campus) email service providers to conduct university business. A substantial number of faculty and staff have chosen to have email sent to their @uci.edu address delivered to an off-campus service.

UCI currently offers Google Apps for Education to students as an opt-in choice. Contracts for offering email and bundled collaboration services to the entire university community including faculty and staff are under negotiation with both Google and Microsoft.

The Email Workgroup determined the following:

- There are risks inherent with any form of email.
- The risks to the University are greatest when the email service is provided by a third party independent of any contract with the University.
- Suitably negotiated and implemented contracts can bring the risks of off-campus email services in line with those of on-campus services.

OIT proposes to open Google Apps service to faculty and staff after the Google contract is approved, to issue communications regarding the availability of the new service and the downsides of using services without contracts in place, and to encourage individuals using non-contract services to move to the contracted one.

The committee was generally supportive of OIT's proposed position.

There is some concern over access and privacy issues with third party email use. Those persons with both a UCI Google email account and a personal Google email account may send university emails through a personal email account, which will not provide University standing as regards the contents of the email. Therefore, education regarding the strengths and limitations of third party email accounts is very important, along with clear and concise language to the faculty and staff about the protection Google (and others) will provide to their privacy.