

Home Help Desk ▸ Administrative Systems Services & Support ▸ Instruction & Research ▸ Network ▸ Telephone ▸ About OIT ▸

[OIT](#) > [About OIT](#) > [Faculty Advisory Committee](#) > **March 30, 2001 Meeting**

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## Faculty Advisory Committee Meeting March 30, 2001

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**Summary:** Faculty Advisory Committee Notes from a March 30, 2001 meeting.

### Introductions

The meeting began with general introductions, with Dana Roode providing some background for the committee:

There has been a gradual shift in UCI's computing environment over the past several decades. Whereas at one point all computing was central in OIT (then the Computing Facility), it gradually became distributed to schools, departments, and workgroups. Over the last 5-10 years each school has developed its own computing support group. These groups provide the bulk of the end-user support within the schools, and OIT concentrates its efforts on central services and infrastructure, on coordinating and supporting support staff in each unit, and on services that complement school support efforts.

OIT overall goals for the faculty advisory group include: a) sharing an awareness of behind-the-scenes OIT activities in support of UCI's technical infrastructure; b) creating a mechanism to review the effectiveness, and future directions, of these activities; and c) discussing future OIT efforts - how can OIT remain directly relevant to faculty in the context of UCI's distributed approach to computing?

[The 1998 Academic Computing Support Review committee outlined an approach to computing support that is largely followed today. The report may be accessed at the following URL: <http://www.nacs.uci.edu/support/review/>]

[Top](#)

### Initial Faculty Comments

- The "human component" of computing is very important – how do we keep UCI's technical staff happy? How do we continue to attract and maintain capable and communicative technical support staff?
- Wireless networking has existed in ICS for several years; the committee should discuss plans for more broad deployment of wireless on campus. [OIT has partnered with the UCI Libraries, GSM, and the Student Center to create wireless access in those locations.]
- It would seem that OIT does not have significant PC or Mac experience, only UNIX experience. [Dana commented that this is a common perception, as the only end-user services that OIT supplies are UNIX based. In fact OIT has significant PC and Mac expertise, which is often funneled through local supporters rather than directly to end-users. Another faculty member noted that he sometimes contacted Andrew Laurence of OIT with certain difficult Macintosh questions and asked if this was appropriate or not. Dana responded that it was.]
- Many years ago, the campus acquired a software license for DNAstar and for a time Harry Mangalam provided support for this package. Since Harry's departure there has not been anyone identified to support this package, and others like it, at UCI. This is an issue for the College of Medicine and for Biological Sciences.
- Its often very difficult for faculty to know who to contact for a specific issue or question. There are a confusing array of central and local organizations that seem to have something to do with computing support. It sometimes seems as if only the "computing enthusiasts" have the energy and skill required to take full advantage of computing resources.
- Computing is now a critical part of the creative processes in the Arts. 1,100 students have been accepted into the Digital Arts program, and they will need access to more computing than available in the school of the Arts alone. How do we go about getting the software used by these students in additional campus labs? Also, the network infrastructure is increasingly important to the Arts, as large files are frequently transferred from one location to another. How do the students maintain copies and backups of their digital works? The network is also important for real-time arts collaborations across the Internet.

[Top](#)

### Wireless Networking

The group spent an amount of time discussing Wireless networking. OIT explained its current "pilot" program, and the Library's laptop loaner program. OIT is waiting to evaluate the response to the pilot program before expanding the service further this year. The observation was made that the pilot may not be a true indication of the effectiveness of wireless networking, as many may not use a system with only patchy coverage. Another observation was that UCI hasn't had a large "laptop culture" thus far, which is required to make full use of wireless networking.

### **OIT Overview: Services, Organization**

A document summarizing OIT services, and issues regarding each, was shared and discussed briefly. Dana Roode went over OIT services, activities, and a subset of current issues that the advisory group might want to discuss in future meetings.

### **OIT Advisory Structure**

The structure of the OIT Advisory mechanism was discussed. Originally, the plan was to include a faculty member from every school, an Academic Senior Manager, a School Computing Coordinator, and a representative from each major administrative unit. As faculty membership was being arranged with each school, schools frequently asked to include their School Computing Coordinator (SCC). SCCs play a critical computing support and coordinator role on campus, but OIT felt they were largely already fairly well-connected to OIT activities and campus computing issues via existing mechanisms.

Dana Roode recommended that the main advisory group be comprised almost entirely of faculty – the OIT Faculty Advisory Group. This will provide an excellent mechanism to help OIT stay in touch with the faculty point of view and academic issues. Dana will discuss with a subset of the SCCs how to ensure SCCs are well connected to OIT planning efforts.

The faculty in attendance generally agreed with this approach, although pointed out the importance of having the school computing coordinator point of view at OIT faculty advisory meetings. Dana will add 1 or 2 School Computing Coordinators as well as an Academic Senior Manager to the advisory group.

[Top](#)

### **Other Issues Discussed.**

- Computer Desktop Initiative: RGS has shared some plans to redirect the funding used for the "Faculty Desktop Computing Initiative" toward graduate student equipment. OIT FAC faculty voiced strong concerns against doing this – the schools do not have any other mechanisms for updating faculty computers. Grants do not cover this equipment as its assumed to be covered out of the indirect cost overhead rate. The real issue for attracting Graduate Students is not computing equipment, it is the high cost of living in the Orange County area. UCI should look into how other campuses fund faculty desktop computing.
- Site Licensing issues at UCI were briefly discussed .
- The School of the Arts is essentially "reinventing" itself and has a huge interest in digital formats and the use of computing in the Arts. There is a major need to be able to send large files around within the Arts, and off-campus, and to archive and provide backup for these files.
- What are the obstacles to using instructional technology at UCI?
- UCI faculty, staff and students make heavy use of cell phones. An important cell vendor is Verizon, who provides telephones that are sold through on-campus stores. Verizon cell coverage is particularly poor in the medical school side of the campus – can this be improved upon? [Dana provided some background information about the Cingular cell site on Engineering Tower and current discussions about placing a Verizon site on campus.]
- The need for increased support of genetics software at UCI is clear – acquiring site licenses to make the software available, and expert staff support to facilitate its use.
- Generally speaking, ICS computing resources are in good shape – significant disk space, wireless networking, etc. It is important to ICS that UCI "open the pipes" connecting UCI to the rest of the world to ensure there are no bottlenecks there.

[Top](#)

### **OIT Action Items**

1. Complete the membership process for OIT Faculty Advisory group, adding 1 or more School Computing Coordinator and an Academic Senior Manager, as well as additional faculty.
2. Check on the status of the campus cell site placement review process – specifically, the status of Verizon's request to install a site.
3. Follow up with Alan Terricciano about what software the School of the Arts would like to see available in campus-wide instructional computing labs.
4. Look into the current situation with regards to campus support of DNASTAR genetics software.
5. Provide a short list of suggested topics for the next advisory meeting, and schedule this meeting for May.
6. Convey faculty concern about the potential loss of the UCI Faculty Desktop Initiative to RGS.

[Top](#)

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