The Committee on Computing & Communications (COMP) met on Monday, April 11, 2005, at 3:00 p.m. in 3401 Dwinelle Hall. Co-Chairs Dave Messerschmitt and Arthur Ogus presided.

IN ATTENDANCE:
Dave Messerschmitt, IEOR, EECS, Co-chair
Arthur Ogus, Math, Co-chair
Robin Einhorn, History
Ken Goldberg, IEOR/EECS
Terence Hendershott, Business
Richard Kern, French
Ethan Ligon, ARE
Merrill Shanks, Political Science
Thomas Wickens, Psychology
Aaron Brick, Graduate Student

Moderators: David Messerschmitt and Arthur Ogus

Approval of COMP Minutes

The minutes from the March 7, 2005 meeting were approved as submitted.

CIO hire characteristics

Dave is a member of the CIO Search Committee; he reported that executive search firms are now being interviewed by the committee in order to choose one that will assist in locating good candidates for the position. Dave asked COMP to list some important characteristics for the new CIO.

Some of the qualities discussed were an understanding of academia and shared governance, a visionary in the use of IT, someone who understands technology, a generalist. Robin said she thinks it is important that the CIO understand and believe in shared governance. Richard said he thinks it is important that he/she sees how important the mission of research and teaching is.

Dave said there are six faculty members on the search committee, and seven administrators. It was suggested that COMP interview the finalists.

Chancellor's letter on security

Dave commented that he thinks the letter (handed out with agenda packet) stresses over-reliance on having a policy in place as an
approach to the problem. Dave said he thinks user assistance, available tools and good websites are more to the point. Arthur suggested getting an outside party to advise the campus might be helpful. Tom said he felt that the solution would not lie in centralization either.

Tom recommended that COMP send a responsive letter to the Chancellor, and the group discussed the points that should be made, with security for gradebook as a high priority. Tools need to be in place for encryption, with a good website for information, training. Dave mentioned that Karen Eft, IST policy manager, is developing an on-line security training module similar to the sexual harassment training issued last year. Ethan objected to the point (2) in the Chancellor's letter "...we will move quickly to require the full encryption of all personal information stored on departmental computer systems.", saying that not all data should be included in the policy regarding encryption, and that there are other ways to secure relational database information.

Dave added that there must be an encryption key recovery system. He said that he and Arthur would put together a draft letter to Chancellor Birgeneau, one that would make the point about the limitations of referring to policy as a solution. Dave will send the draft to COMP via email before the next meeting.

Vanilla environment

Dave said he sees three issues to be addressed in the "vanilla environment" planning process: (1) "What we would like - functionally", (2) support mechanisms, (3) funding mechanisms. He introduced a draft proposal for campus personal computing, explaining that he thought the first step should be to agree on common goals for the vanilla environment, with ideas for support and funding mechanisms to be considered at a later time. His proposal began with statements regarding goals, with a focus on what COMP is trying to achieve. Dave went over his rationale behind the goals, saying that bringing campus operating systems and software up to date would reduce the number of maintenance problems and bring vendor support to departments. Dave blamed the fragmented funding process at the university for the fact that maintenance cost is often pushed back to the departments, creating overall inefficiency.

The goals were discussed; Richard objected to line 18 use of the word "automatically" in reference to computer upgrades, saying this takes control away from the department, and that wrong timing could cause problems. It was agreed that the details could be worked out, but that the overall goal is a good one.

Dave summarized the rationale by saying he had wanted to address the following: keeping overall costing to a minimum, increased user satisfaction (fewer problems), solving the digital divide by providing a pc to everyone employed by campus, improving security substantially, moving staffing resources to more appropriate areas and relying more on vendors for support, and deploying and maintaining an automatic upgrade and patching infrastructure. Tom said he thinks the goals are more clearly stated than the rationale
part of the document. Ken commented that the last two bullets would be better expressed in terms of a future objective, rather than a statement of criticism of the current state of affairs.

Arthur said that he compared the document he wrote to this one, and found that his seemed more "wishy-washy", however he thinks that Dave's document is overstating the case, and expressed doubt about the stated facts (particularly the footnote regarding the 15% proportion of hardware/software costs to overall computing cost). Arthur also said he had difficulty with loss of departmental control over computers and software.

Dave stressed that the goal is to address desktop computing only, and to try to benefit the broad campus community. Some thought this should be an opt-in program. Ethan proposed that the university provide a certain amount of money to each employee to be used on computing as they choose if they opt out of the program. Dave repeated that the advantage of setting some standards rather than continue with the current situation would be lost in that case.

Dave suggested that the document be refined in the next month, in preparation to send to the IT Funding and Governance committee chaired by Jud King, and possibly to CAPRA.

Merrill added that he had drafted a proposal for a pilot project on the "vanilla standard" idea, and that it will be included in the budget proposal for IST.

Webcam policy proposal

Ken presented some background on his webcam art project last fall, designed to raise awareness of digital privacy issues. A powerful digital camera was installed on Sproul Plaza which could be controlled through a web site. Jack McCredie found a UCPD policy on cameras, however it doesn't take the increasing sophistication of digital technology into account. The policy needs to address surveillance, research and art, with a website set up to define parameters.

Ken talked to the Committee on Human Subjects about the use of cameras in research, and they agreed to develop a policy. UCPD will provide the policy on security cameras. Ethan said he could not see a clear distinction between these kinds of uses; he referred to photography in journalism where first amendment rights could be violated by restrictions. Dave asked whether UCOP had the responsibility to put up a site and bear the cost. Ken said that he chairs a committee on digital privacy, and will bring a proposal to COMP for feedback. Ken wants to avoid future problems in this area.

The meeting was adjourned at 5 p.m.

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Committee Web Page: http://www.eecs.berkeley.edu/~messer/Campus/COMP/