

The College of New Jersey Information Technology

To: Nadine Stern, VP for Information Technology & Enrollment Services

Purpose: End-of-Year Status Report for June, 2009

Submitted: Lynn Braender, Academic Computing Advisor

Introduction

The position of Academic Computer Advisor (ACA) was first introduced in the Fall of 2005 by the Vice President for Information Technology and Enrollment Services (IT& ES), Nadine Stern. The Academic Computing Advisor (ACA) is a faculty member who receives some reassignment from teaching to work on projects with IT and to identify academic issues that may concern IT holds this position. Nadine's vision for this position is to enhance communication between Information Technology and the academic community so that the college can continue strengthening its academic computing environment and tackle new opportunities and challenges brought on by changes with technology. To meet this vision, the Academic Computing Advisor meets regularly with faculty, leaders in the academic community, and IT staff to discuss issues relating to the academic computing environment.

To date, there have been three Academic Computing Advisors; Dr. Tom Hagedorn from Mathematics and Statistics, Dr. Felicia Steele from English, and, myself, Lynn Braender from Information Systems in the School of Business. I've held this position since September 2007 and will continue in this capacity for another academic year.

The partnership between IT and the Academic Computing Advisor has proven to be productive. Because of it, conversations about academic needs, innovations, and potential opportunities have occurred across campus. In addition, the Information Technology Planning Council (ITPC) provides a wealth of information and a channel to disseminate technological activities and issues throughout the campus community. Because of the conversations occurring in the planning council and meetings between IT, ACA and the academic community, changes have occurred. For instance, in the past year, IT has purchased new survey software for research and assessment, data management software to record and report faculty activities, and web development software that allows the academic community to take advantage of Web 2.0 technology. Discussions with academic leaders have also led to innovative solutions to academic challenges and changes in the way tasks are completed. The IT administration, Support Specialist, programmers, developers, and other specialists have proved to be supportive, receptive, knowledgeable, and willing to meet the evolving needs of the academic community.

The statements made above are not meant to imply that IT and the academic community do not face difficult times ahead; we do. The two groups still struggle with communication and strategic planning. In addition, the budgetary challenges have cut some of the monies available for the IT mini grant, slowed the deployment of wireless technology, and prevented needed expansion with technological resources and available services. But, the college community should be aware of the efforts and accomplishments made in the past year by the activities driven by IT. This end-of-year report will attempt to provide the college community with some of this information. In addition, it will also identify some of the emerging issues that I believe are confronting TCNJ.

2008-2009 Activities & Accomplishments

Lunch'n Learn Workshops – With the help of Ryan Gladysiewicz, Assistant Director for Instructional Technology Services (ITS), we offered five Lunch'n Learn workshops to the academic community. Each one-hour workshop was fully attended and, at time, exceeded seating limitations. We also offered a half-day workshop during the January break that, even though it did not meet full capacity, it received high praise from those who participated. These workshops provide economical opportunities for faculty to gain an understanding of new technology and new resources at the College. The topics and the names of the presenters for these Lunch'n Learn workshops follow.

1. Engaging Students in the Classroom using Clickers and Net Support - October 1, 2008. Presenters (1) Lynn Braender, School of Business, Using Net Support in the Computer Labs; (2) Joe Hadge, Student Affairs, and Matt Leibowitz, Graduate Assistant, Engaging Students through Clickers; (3) Ryan Gladysiewicz, User Support Services (USS), and Jonathon Trabilcy, Support Specialist, Questions and Answers Session.
2. On the Road Again: Being Mobile – November 5, 2008. Presenters Ryan Gladysiewicz, USS, and Alan Bowen, Manager of IT Security.
3. An Introduction to Web 2.0 Technologies – January 12, 2008. Craig Kapp presented the half-day workshop with support from Ryan Gladysiewicz and Lynn Braender.
4. Using Web 2.0 Technology in SOCS – March 4, 2009. Presenters (1) Ryan Gladysiewicz, USS, Creating a Chat Room in SOCS to Support Virtual Student Meetings; (2) Ellen Friedman, English, Using the SOCS Wiki to Support Student Work; and (3) Lynn Braender, School of Business, Establishing Team Space in SOCS to Support Student Collaboration and Assessment.
5. Web Sites You Can't Live Without – April 1, 2009. Presented by Peter DePasquale, Computer Science.

Communication Plan – I led the effort to revise the academic communication plans that were originally developed by Pat Pasinski, Executive Assistant to the VP for IT& ES, with the Dean

from each school for the 2005-2006 Academic Year; these were later updated for 2006-2007. In the past, a plan was developed for each school; it identified how the school would communicate with IT and actions items that needed to be completed. Our team, which is comprised of IT management (Pat Pasinski, Jeff Kerswill, Andy Stuzman and Ryan Gladysiewicz), support specialists, and volunteers from the Information Technology Planning Council, obtained consensus on one plan that would be used by all schools including the library. This plan identified common key tasks that needed to be completed throughout the academic year and during the summer months. In addition, the new communication plan identified the responsible person(s), deadlines, and processes for completing each task. Feedback from the Deans was incorporated into the document and approval from the Deans and Nadine Stern was obtained in May, 2009. The plan will be implemented in September 2009; Andy Stutzman, Associate Director of USS, will manage the process. In addition, school accomplishments will be posted to the IT website at the end of each fiscal year.

Faculty Data Systems Committee – As a member of the Faculty Data Systems Committee led by Paula Maas, Executive Director of Institutional Research, and Ryan Gladysiewicz, Assistant Director for Instructional Technology Services, the committee identified common information needs regarding faculty data that each school and the college needs for reporting purposes. These information and reporting needs are often requested by our accreditation agencies. The committee recommended purchasing Digital Measures to collect and manage this faculty data. Nadine Stern, Vice President for IT & ES, and Carol Bresnahan, Provost and Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs accepted the recommendations.

Survey Software – As a member of the ad hoc committee to review online survey tools that was led by Ryan Gladysiewicz, we obtained consensus on recommending the purchasing of Qualtrics. The recommendation was submitted and accepted by Nadine Stern, Vice President for IT & ES. The software was purchased at the end of the Spring 2009 semester and training began in May.

Internet Safety and Web 2.0 Technology – During the 2008-2009 academic year, Craig Kapp and I developed a website that teaches students about some of the social challenges and opportunities that are created by the widespread use of the Internet. In addition, we used the site to teach students simple ways to protect their personal systems and campus resources from digital attacks. The site uses Web 2.0 technology and WordPress to develop a learning environment that also allows students to build a new culture through interaction, commenting, rating, and posting of reactions to how our community uses technology in appropriate and inappropriate ways.

Our goal for this work was to satisfy the mission of the College and the School of Business to develop socially responsible citizens who are able to assume leadership roles after graduation. We also wanted to create a site that was interesting, cost efficient and self-perpetuating. The site was successfully deployed in the School of Business and will, hopefully, expand to other areas in and out of the College. In addition to this project, student members from the

Information Technology Planning Council (ITPC) spoke to the council about the student interest in and need for WordPress. The ITPC student members felt that WordPress provided them with powerful, yet easy to use, software for building student websites. Because of these conversations and the interest faculty have shown for Web 2.0 technologies, IT invested in a WordPress system. The system that Craig Kapp and I built will be transferred to the College's new WordPress site in the summer of 2009.

Emerging Issues

Strategic Planning – IT Administration have continuously requested strategic plans from the schools so that IT can successfully prepare for the future. To date, their efforts have failed. Because of the high turnover rate with academic leadership and the inherent difficulties of planning for technology, it has been difficult, at best, to identify the future technological needs of schools other than universal needs such as wireless computing and newer equipment. Schools have been reluctant to provide these strategic plans to IT probably because they need to develop formal strategic plans for the College and they lack a strong understanding of technology and the changes that will be affecting our future.

Action – During the 2009-2010 AY, I will work with Jeff Kerswill and the Academic leaders to develop strategic plans for each school.

Mobile Computing – According to the 2009 Horizon Report published by The New Media Consortium and Educause, the technologies that will affect the academic community in the next year are mobiles and cloud computing, both of which are well established on many campuses. These campuses are using mobile devices such as the iPhone to support education anywhere. Many campuses are taking advantage of cloud computing to offset operating costs and to ensure that students have their documents anywhere and at anytime; even after graduation.

Action – IT Administration has been discussing mobile and cloud computing and are in the process of forming opinions about this area. We may wish to move this topic to a faculty forum so that the campus community can be part of the discussion.

Geo-Everything – According to the 2009 Horizon Report, researchers are analyzing the possibility of tagging data, photographs, and maps to provide a wealth of knowledge about places (both physical and virtual), historical events, objects, and experiences to enrich our knowledge and experiences.

Action –ITPC should encourage faculty to submit a proposal for the IT mini grant to research this area of new technology in relationship to our educational community. The Director of User Support Services should add this item, and similar items identified by ITPC, to the “call for proposals” that is sent to the academic community.

E-Collaboration, E-Portfolios, E-Documents – There has been a tremendous amount of discussion in the academic world about Schools using the resources provided by Google, Microsoft, and other software vendors to store and collaborate on documents. In addition, schools are requiring students to create E-Portfolios to ease the assessment burden of collecting and storing documents to show to accreditation institutions. Since most colleges close student accounts after graduations, many of them are examining outside resources such as Google, Microsoft, Mahara, WordPress, Acrobat, etc, to manage these documents. The College needs to join the discussion to determine (1) when it is and isn't appropriate to place College documents in external repositories; (2) what E-Portfolio environment we wish to endorse; and, (3) what kind of training is needed for our campus community.

Action – I will also ask Pat Pasinski to place this discussion item on a September agenda for ITPC so that a task force can be formed to lead this discussion and provide the college with recommendations.

Issues Placed on Hold

Colleagues Committed to Redesign (C2R) – The National Center for Academic Transformation provides colleges and universities an opportunity to obtain grant money for transforming a core course with heavy student enrollment. The goal for this course would be to utilize technology in the course to improve student learning while reducing operating costs. After consultation with faculty and administration, it was decided that the application process would be postponed until the Teaching and Learning Center was developed and the director of that center could lead this effort. Hopefully, we will be ready to apply for this prestigious grant in the 2010-2011 academic year.

Action: Allow the forthcoming director for the Teaching and Learning Center to lead this process.

Internet2 and the Philadelphia Orchestra –The College shares a regional optical network with other NJ colleges and institutions through NJEdge.net, New Jersey's Higher Education Network. Through this, we have access to Internet2 providing us with faster access for global research and collaboration. During the 2007-2008 AY, we were presented with an idea from Richard Kroth and Teresa Marrin Nakra to stream in five live performances from the Philadelphia Orchestra into the Mayo Music Hall or Kendal Hall. Because of bandwidth requirements for these performances from NJEdge and the College, we are not ready to undertake this endeavor. The amount of bandwidth needed to stream these live performances into the college during daytime hours is not currently available.

Action: Shawn Sivy and I will continue to monitor the technological capabilities available through NJEdge. When our bandwidth is capable of handling the needed Internet 2 bandwidth, we will revisit this opportunity with the Music Department.

Internet2 and Broadcasting Sports – There is an affiliate to the Sarnoff Corporation located in West Windsor, NJ that has developed a system that would record sports events for Division 3 colleges and broadcast these events over Internet2. These smart recording systems are self-directed and need minimal human support. If installed at TCNJ, they would allow alumni, family and friends to watch our students compete at home games. Currently, there is very little interest from the academic community to install these devices. This is a mistake, especially since sports groups, college and universities are moving in this direction. The college will eventually need to broadcast its sports events over the Internet. At some point it will be expected of us. Regardless of this, the goodwill created by broadcasted sports events is great. The college should explore this technology and find a champion to support it. This champion(s) should come from the Athletics and/or Public Relations & Communications departments.

Action: This is not an academic issue; therefore, I will forward this information to the Executive Director of Public Relations & Communications, Matthew Golden.

Continuing Issues

Faculty Technical Knowledge

During my conversations with Deans, Assistant Deans, and campus leaders, I discovered that there is a perception that faculty knowledge of current and emerging technological tools, applications, and issues in their area is stagnant. This perception was also discussed in the conferences that I attended. Many TCNJ leaders see the technological and cultural gap between faculty and students growing. With dwindling resources and increasing demands on faculty time, we need to develop effective strategies to enhance faculty academic computing knowledge.

Action

With dwindling resources and increasing demands on faculty time, TCNJ leaders should develop effective strategies to enhance the academic computing knowledge of faculty. Any approach must be multifaceted. Some suggestions are listed below. I will discuss these issues with Academic Leaders at school administration meetings and faculty at the Lunch'n Learn workshops.

- ✓ **Early Adopters of Technology** - Identify, encourage, and support early adopters of technology. Ensure that early adopters have knowledge of local and online resources that support continuing education. Examples of this type of resource could be the conferences and focus groups supported by NJEDdge and webcasts provided by Educause and the Society for College and University Planning. Have these early adopters speak to our college community about their experiences through campus workshops.

- ✓ Focus Groups – These groups may be a means of supporting interdisciplinary conversations, providing a learning mechanism to faculty, and spurring innovative academic uses of emerging technologies (e.g. Wiki builders, Internet2, etc.).
- ✓ Guest Speakers – Schools, programs, and groups need to bring in speakers from outside the college to discuss specific technological issues (as compared to global or high level topics) that affect them directly. The school has enjoyed success with internal presentations and workshops; we need to complement this activity with leaders from peer and aspirant schools, and, from industry. We should also take advantage of local Information Technology conferences such as NJEDge and webcasts.
- ✓ Workshops - During the 2009-2010 academic year, I hope to run a series of Lunch'n Learn workshops including workshops that are basic and others that are more advanced. I will also search for new educational opportunities from web conferences and campus affiliation with professional organizations such as Educause and NJEDge.
- ✓ Podcasts, webcasts, and web conferences are also emerging as an effective learning environment that allows people to attend workshops from their home or office. The college could rely more on these to reduce travelling costs and increase the knowledge of its community. Whenever possible, I will also identify and promote podcasts and webcasts through the faculty discussion list.

Ethics and Security

Technology creates new ethical challenges that require our community to act responsibly, professionally, and intelligently. We need to build a culture that requires the academic community to prepare students to live and work in a techno-community and to behave in ways that support TCNJ's vision. To address this issue, we need to ensure that the appropriate courses are teaching students the social, legal, and ethical use of information resources.

Action

Each school needs to ensure that these topics are in its curriculum and that they can be tied back to the college's mission statement. If a school wishes to use the website that Craig Kapp and I developed, they need to contact me at braender@tcnj.edu. If this site is missing critical information needed by a school, members from that school could develop articles on the missing subject and post them to the site.

Assessment

There is an increasing demand being placed on schools to assess the quality of their programs and processes. As stated before, IT has purchased two systems to support our assessment needs. From an administration need, schools will use Digital Measures to collect and manage faculty data. From an educational and research need, faculty can use Qualtrics to collect survey information. In addition, SOCS is suitable for student assessment within a course and/or program.

Action

Andy Stutzman, Associate Director of USS, and Paula Mass, Executive Director of Institutional Research, are the Project Managers for Qualtrics. Andy Stutzman will manage the technical side of this system and Paula Maas will manage training and faculty support. This training opportunity will be conveyed to the College community through email, ITPC, and the Lunch'n Learn workshops. In addition, the college will migrate away from the existing, and outdated, Form Genie.

Janice Huang, with assistance from Paula Maas and Ryan Gladysiewicz, is leading the implementation of Digital Measures.

The Lunch'n Learn workshops and the IT Spring workshop have both focused on SOCS assessment features during the 2008-2009 academic year. If faculty request more information, we will continue to use these venues for further instruction.

Funding and Resources

To stay competitive, the college, schools, and programs will need more money to fund their future information technology needs. The budget for IT has been reduced in recent years and it appears it will continue to operate with a minimalistic approach. The college needs to identify creative ways to fund individual, interdisciplinary, and school projects. To date, the IT department is funding mini-grants; this process has earned favorable feedback from faculty, administration and external constituents. In addition, many of these mini-grants are involving students in research, thereby supporting the college's goal to provide students with research opportunities. If the college wishes to spur innovation in academic computing and raise the technological skill, knowledge, and usage of its community, it needs to continue funding these mini-grants. With greater demands for resources by the schools and the perceived low quality of submissions in the past, funds for mini grants have been cut in half and are at risk of being eliminated.

Schools will also need to fund special projects involving technology. Some may be small; for instance, a laptop with docking capabilities for a new faculty and technologically skilled faculty. Some may be large; for instance, creating or renovating a lab to support an innovative program or purchasing GPS systems for students traveling into unsafe communities for projects, journalistic endeavors, and service. The college might think about creating alumni and industry donation opportunities to fund special projects.

Action

During the 2009-2010 AY, I will work on the submission and assessment process for the IT mini grants to assure that the submission and assessment process is well understood and the quality of funded mini grants is high.

The level of discussion needed to address resource and funding issues lies with the entire campus community. The communication plan was built and has been revised to ensure that

conversations about resource needs will take place at all levels of our academic community. The Associate Director of User Support Services, Andy Stutzman, will monitor these conversations and will provide feedback through minutes to IT & ES, the Academic Leaders for each school, the Academic Computing Advisor and ITPC.

SOCS – Simple Online Courseware System

SOCS, the college's course management system, has proven to be enormously successful. During the past year, the management of SOCS has transferred to the Assistant Director for Instructional Technology Services, Ryan Gladysiewicz. They've successfully incorporated new technology into SOCS and have significantly influenced the use of technology in our academic environment. The college's success with SOCS can be seen by the enormous strains placed on this system. To maintain this success, the college needs to continue funding and expanding SOCS or move to a commercial system that provides advanced capabilities.

Action

The IT administration is currently discussing the opportunities and challenges inherent with SOCS and comparing these to commercial systems. A decision about our course management system will be forthcoming.

Concluding Remarks

Due to the many conversations that have occurred at TCNJ over the past year, many challenges and opportunities in academic computing have been identified. During this time, I have come to appreciate the amount of effort, skill, thoughtfulness, and caring that emits from our IT staff. They spend an enormous amount of time ensuring that the college runs smoothly and that technology is available to the academic community. I've also come to appreciate the academic computing advisor position and the bridging effect it can create between the academic community and IT. This person can bring insights to Academic Leaders and IT staff regarding the educational community and the learning environment. In addition, faculty may understand opportunities for incorporating technological change into the learning environment because the academic computing advisor is able to describe these ideas in the context of education. But, most of all, the conversations that occur as a result of this position spur thinking in, and create relationships with, the academic community and IT; both of which are invaluable to creating change.

During the past year, a number of initiatives that started in the previous academic year came to fruition. The Faculty Data Systems Committee investigated the assessment needs of the college and purchased the Digital Software Measures to manage the needs of the College. An ad hoc committee reviewed survey software and recommended Qualtrics to the College; the College agreed and purchased this system. The ITPC recommended the purchase of WordPress to support advanced web development for academic projects and student websites. We launched a website built on Web 2.0 technology to teach students about acting

ethically and safely in cyberspace. And, Academic Affairs and IT supported five Lunch'n Learn workshops geared to improving IT knowledge in the academic environment.

We still have much to do. The pace of academic change in technology related areas is accelerating. It is a daunting task for the computer savvy person to keep up with this pace; it would be impossible for a teacher not trained in computers to be adept in technology without strong support and direction from the college. We must find cost-efficient ways to bring technical knowledge to the campus and provide opportunities for non-technical faculty to incorporate it into their classroom. We must maintain a competitive edge with our peer institutions, many of which have a stronger funding opportunity.

To address the changing technological landscape, I will continue to offer Lunch'n Learn Workshops that focus upon emerging technology used in the academic environment. I will focus my efforts on assisting schools with their efforts to develop their strategic plans or visions regarding technology. Finally, I will continue talking with the academic community about the technology identified in the Horizon report that will have the greatest short-term impact on the college learning environment.