

The College of New Jersey Information Technology

To: Nadine Stern, VP for IT & Enroll Support Services
Purpose: Mid-Year Status Report
Submitted: Lynn Braender, Academic Computing Advisor

During the Fall 2007 semester, my efforts as the new Academic Computing Advisor was to continue efforts initiated by Tom Hagedorn and Felicia Steele including (a) ensuring the effective relationship and open communication between IT and the academic community; (b) facilitating the planning efforts of each school; and (c) determining the competitive nature of our IT resources. The following report provides a status of these efforts as of January, 2008.

Effective Relationships and Open Communication

Deans Council

To ensure the effective relationship and open communication between IT and the academic community, I've regularly attended the Dean's monthly meetings with Jeff Kerswill. To date, I've met with Taras Pavlovsky, Bill Behre, Susan Albertine, Alex Czeto. Due to the scheduling challenges Jack Kirnan faced in the fall semester with accreditation, I have spoken with him in informal discussions. In the dean's meetings, we discuss current IT issues and future IT needs. I will continue to attend these meetings once per semester per dean to speak about current issues and to identify future IT needs. I've also attended the Dean's Council meeting with Nadine Stern and Jeff Kerswill to discuss high-level IT issues. Nadine, Pat, Jeff and I agreed that I should attend these monthly meetings in the spring. Jeff will include me in the schedule.

In addition to meeting with the deans, I met regularly with Nadine Stern and Pat Pasinski to provide them with updates on the conversations I've had with members of the TCNJ community and the issues discussed in these conversations. In addition, I have met with key IT staff, including Jeff Kerswill, Craig Kapp, and Shawn Sivy to discuss issues relating to IT and the academic environment.

ITPC

As the Academic Computing Coordinator, I have attended bi-weekly Information Technology Planning Council meetings and Teaching/Learning Initiative meetings. The

ITP council is very informative and provides important information from teachers, students, and staff about all aspects of technology on campus, to the VP of IT/ESS. I am also leading a Teacher/Scholar task force in this council that meets once a month which examines academic computing resources at TCNJ and how they compare to other peer and aspirant schools. The goal for this task force is to investigate the competitive nature of IT usage of some areas within the college and report its finding back to this council. Our goal is to understand the current technology usages within the college and to note our competitive nature with a limited number of peer schools. To help us, we've developed a wiki so that we might work in a virtual environment. Because of scheduling constraints and the academic and administrative demands placed on our members, we've only met once and little information has been found.

Teaching/Learning Task Force

The Teaching/Learning Initiative taskforce was recently established by Beth Paul, Interim Provost. It is clear from the discussions in the meetings and from our assigned readings that IT will be an integral part of any Teaching/Learning center. This taskforce will provide a report to the college by the end of the 2008 spring semester.

Knowledge

In addition to speaking with key members of the campus community, I have also attended the NJ Edge Fall conference and have coordinated and attended the webcast on "Education in Exponential Times: How Technology-Enabled Change is Reshaping Higher Education".

IT Planning Efforts

Internet 2

Faculty and staff members from the music department responded to a statement made by Nadine Stern about the value of Internet 2. This response initiated a conversation between Teresa Marrin Nakra, Richard Kroth, and me about streaming in a series of live performances from the Philadelphia Orchestra. Subsequent conversations about the technical requirements and possibilities ensued with Taras Pavlovsky, Shawn Sivy, Andrew Brunetto, Richard Rose, Jon Bannan, and Brad Coburn. There are many technical challenges with bringing in this concert to The College of New Jersey. We can overcome some of these challenges but it is still questionable whether or not we would be able to obtain enough space from our Internet 2 connection with NJ Edge, TCNJ's Internet 2 provider. Conversations with NJ Edge have occurred and possibilities are being explored.

Action

Shawn Sivy and I will continue exploring technical solutions with NJ Edge. There may be a slight possibility that NJ Edge will be capable of providing a short burst of Internet 2 space to the college for these performances. In addition, I will continue to seek Internet

2 opportunities for the college campus. Finally, to support a series of performances, I have asked Teresa Nakra and Richard Kroth to investigate possible funding sources (e.g., NSF). A solution will not appear quickly, if at all, on this endeavor. But, if it does, beautiful music will come to the campus.

Colleagues Committed to Redesign (C²R)

Beth Paul requested that I coordinate efforts for the college to apply for the C²R grant from The National Center for Academic Transformation. To accomplish this goal, we need to first identify one course that could be transformed to incorporate the teaching models created by this NCAT. These models bring technology into the classroom and the learning environment. Discussions have begun with interested faculty including Bob Anderson, Rosa Zagari-Marinzoli, Craig Kapp, and Taras Pavlovsky. Jeff Osborne, faculty from the math department, and Susan Albertine have also stated an interest in this grant.

Action

During the spring 2008 semester, I will spearhead the process to identify a TCNJ course for the C²R grant. I will identify a team that will write the grant and who will participate in required activities and conferences. In addition, Craig Kapp and I will work to bring Carol Twigg or Candace Thille, authors and experts in this field, as the guest speaker to the IT Spring Workshop.

Workshops and Presentations

Craig Kapp and I will work together to offer two lunch'n learn presentations during the Spring 2008 semester. The goal for these presentations will be to address the perceived stagnation in faculty knowledge of current and emerging technological tools, applications, and issues in their area. Many people that I spoke with at TCNJ see the technological and cultural gap between faculty and students growing. With dwindling resources and increasing demands on faculty time, we are attempting to develop effective strategies to enhance their academic computing knowledge. The lunch'n learn presentations will be one approach to addressing these perceived deficiencies.

Action

To date, Craig and I have identified potential speakers from the current faculty pool. We have also selected topics that will provide faculty with proven ideas to use technology and improve the efficiency of classroom management and faculty/student communications.

To enhance learning, Craig and I are also investigating the possibility of bringing an expert from Carnegie Mellon to speak to the campus community about incorporating technology into courses. Our anticipated timeframe for this campus presentation is Spring 2008.

Emerging Ethical Issues

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, I applied for and received an IT mini grant that will build an online learning environment for TCNJ students. To date, a student worker has been hired to assist with the design and development process. We are speaking with experts in the IT field to help us identify the best environment to support the educational goals of this project. The finished product will be presented at the IT Spring Workshop.

Action

An interactive learning environment employing emerging web tools will be created in the Spring 2008 semester. With assistance from Craig Kapp and Christopher Gifford, an Interactive Multimedia undergraduate student, I will develop this site. We have received approval to test this learning environment in the School of Business' Freshmen Seminar and the sophomore-level introductory IT course in the Fall 2008. If successful, we will look for opportunities to expand student learning outside of the School of Business.

Emerging Academic/IT Issues Facing TCNJ

During my conversations with Academic Deans, academic administration, faculty, and IT administration and staff, common issues affecting our academic computing were identified. Some of these issues are critical and should be reacted to quickly. The following is a discussion of them.

Assessment

There is an increasing demand being placed on schools to assess the quality of their programs and processes. Currently, there is no shared effort to identify assessment requirements or solutions across all schools. For example, the School of Education has successfully employed SOCS to manage and run this process. Unfortunately, it has reached a point where their IT requirements surpass the capabilities of SOCS. Conversely, the School of Engineering has developed their own database system to maintain their assessment data. And now, the School of Business wants to purchase a system that could assist them. If each school continues down this course, and others follow, the college will be unable to centralize assessment information. The development of future systems designed to consolidate this information will be difficult and costly.

Action

It is critical that the college set a strategy to integrate all assessment activity into one system. To address this, conversations with key individuals are occurring. Nadine Stern, along with her staff, Deans, and administrators have met and will continue to discuss issues relating to this crucial area. In addition, the following activities are occurring:

- ✓ Nadine Stern is developing an inclusive task force to identify data requirements
- ✓ Jeff Kerswill is planning a Dean's Council Meeting to educate them on the assessment capabilities currently available in SOCs
- ✓ Craig Kapp and Paula Maas have extended an invitation to all assessment committees on campus to demonstrate SOC's capabilities and to discover user needs not currently supported by SOCS
- ✓ Craig Kapp and I have scheduled spring lunch'n learn presentations that will discuss, in part, SOCS assessment capabilities.
- ✓ I will continue to speak with campus leaders and participate in discussions on these matters.

Knowledge

The deans that I met with informally and formally spoke of their concerns with the perceived stagnation in faculty knowledge of current and emerging technological tools, applications, and issues in their area. They see the technological and cultural gap between faculty and students growing. With dwindling resources and increasing demands on faculty time, TCNJ leaders are attempting to develop effective strategies to enhance the academic computing knowledge of faculty. Academic leaders have agreed that any approach must be multifaceted. Some suggestions are listed below.

- ✓ 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 NJ Edge and webcasts provided by Educause and the Society for College and University Planning.
- ✓ 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, Internet 2, 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.

Action

With support from IT/Enrollment Support Service and Academic Affairs, Craig Kapp and I have initiated a series of lunch presentations directed towards the academic community. The goal for the current series is to present simple ideas to bring technology into the curriculum. If the series is successful, we will also investigate providing more advanced topics to technically savvy educators, so that a range of faculty with differing skills can benefit from this endeavor. I will search for new educational opportunities from web conferences, campus affiliation with professional organizations, and NJ Edge.

Funding

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 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 school, funds from this pool may be at risk of being absorbed back into general funds. This must not happen.

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 travelling into unsafe communities for projects, journalistic endeavors, and service. The college needs to create alumni and industry donation opportunities to fund special projects.

Action

The level of discussion needed to address this issue lies with administration. The onus is on administration to address these issues.

SOCS

SOCS has proven to be enormously successful. Craig Kapp, with the assistance of John Kuiphoff, has created a course management system that enhances the learning environment at TCNJ. 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.

Action

As conversations continue on campus about assessment, new requirements for SOCS will be identified.

Document Management and E-Collaboration

Schools, programs, and committees need to be able to manage formal documents. Collaboration across these groups is extremely important and can only be effectively facilitated by an online document management system. In addition, we need to set up a shared environment that allows faculty and students to identify others working in related research areas or areas of interest. We need to capitalize on emerging Internet technology to create a virtual environment that enhances the efficiencies of research, teaching and learning.

Action

I will ask Jeff Kerswill to place this discussion item on the Deans' Council agenda. I will also ask Pat Pasinski if this item should be addressed by ITPC.

Concluding Remarks

Due to the conversations I've had this past semester with faculty, the IT department, and the deans and their staff, I've had the privilege to learn much about the college and the challenges and opportunities facing it. I've come to appreciate, at a much higher level, 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 affect it can obtain between the academic community and IT.

As a result of the first 5 months as academic computing advisor, a number of initiatives have begun. Nadine Stern created a task force to investigate the assessment needs of the college. IT has discovered that there is a shared and common need for assessment data and school reporting. Craig Kapp and I have developed a Lunch'N Learn series where faculty can learn simple ways to incorporate available technology into their courses. These workshops have also spurred conversations about innovative ways to use technology in the classroom including Internet 2 applications. Finally, Jeff Kerswill and I continue to meet with each school dean. We have had some interesting conversations with them and have learned more about each school's IT needs and their academic culture. We have also shared with them ideas about emerging technology, mini grant opportunities, and simple ways to tackle the challenges facing them.

In conclusion, I will continue the efforts begun in September 2007. I will continue to explore the needs of the campus, introduce ideas to the academic community, and build bridges to enhance academic computing.