Research and Administrative Computing Committee (RACC)

Summary of October 8, 2007 Meeting


Not Present: Ted Belytschko- McCormick School of Engineering & Applied Science, Craig Bina- Weinberg College of Arts & Sciences, Noshir Contractor- McCormick School of Engineering & Applied Science, Gary Greenberg- Information Technology, Mary McDermott- Feinberg School of Medicine, Sarah Pritchard- University Library, George Schatz- Weinberg College of Arts & Sciences

Mort Rahimi reviewed the charge of the committee and shared the University’s commitment to translate Vision 2020 to action. Jean Shedd and Jim Hurley added that there was recognition of the importance of research computing and the central resources needed to address computing now and in the future.

The Committee was provided with a “working document” on Current Known Demands for servers/nodes in the University’s data centers. It was indicated that this document was being further refined and would be one of the components to determine the size and capacity of the immediate expansion of the Evanston Data Center and future planning.

Tom Halloran, associate director of NUIT Computing Services, provided an overview of the Data Center Elements. This was followed by a discussion of the current limitations in the Chicago and Evanston data centers. Rex Chisholm noted that there will be very significant needs in the Medical School in the near term and suggested that Vision 2020 be updated to incorporate these needs and the needs of other researchers that have occurred since document’s publication. A question was raised asking if outsourcing was being considered and the response was yes, it was on the table. Outsourcing was a consideration for both short and long term needs. Mark Satterthwaite said the outsourcing had both positives and negatives that would need to be weighed before a decision was finalized. This was followed by a discussion on the power and cooling elements of a data center. Vicky Kalogera shared that there was not always a direct correlation between node type and the power and cooling required. The other component was the cost of the equipment and if a researcher could purchase more than the planned number of nodes within available budget, they will do so. This could increase the power and cooling requirements.
Patricia Todus provided central IT’s current approach for addressing the needs of research and administrative computing. She shared the current infrastructure environment in the University’s data centers, efficiencies that have been introduced, and described the evaluations and upgrades of the data centers since 2003.

Mort Rahimi closed by asking the Committee to help develop the short term and long term goals for the University’s computing adding that there are no restrictions on the thinking. The University recognizes that there are very serious issues that the researchers face that must be dealt with as soon as practically possible. To that end the Committee is scheduled to meet every two weeks for the remainder of the calendar year.

The meeting was adjourned.