02/13/08 Agenda

1) Vicky Kalogera – Co-Chair, RACC Research Subcommittee
   Research Computing Support Status

2) IT Planning Process - Steve Beck, NUIT Director of Administration and
   Finance

3) Academic Technology - Bob Taylor, Director

Summary notes from 02/13/08 meeting

In attendance:
Mort Rahimi, ex officio
Chuck Dowding, chair
Vicky Kalogera
Bob Taylor, ex officio
Sarah Pritchard, ex officio
Suzanne Auburn, secretary
Steve Beck, guest
Clarke Caywood
Carl Smith

I. Vicky Kalogera, Associate Professor of Astronomy and Physics spoke as co-chair
of the Research Computing subcommittee of the Research and Administrative
Computing Committee (RACC) by first addressing its purpose:

- To identify research and administrative computing needs in the university over
  the next five to ten years.
- Review best practices and approaches to computing environments at peer and
  competitive institutions and recommend best practices that could be adopted at
  Northwestern.
- Advise on development of a new data center for the University, to address the
  University’s long-term computing facility needs; advise on solutions to meet
  immediate (short-term) and medium-term needs.

From work of the Research Subcommittee of RACC, the findings are that faculty and
staff has increased their uses of computing due to:

- pressure by government research grant award applications to cyber-collaborate
  outside of the university
needs for an innovation center that will be available to take advantage of the forefront of technology
continued system improvements, and therefore additional cost
administrative functions

The current focus for the committee is to decide on the data center infrastructure options:

- Upgrade current facilities on Evanston and Chicago campuses
- Build a new site in basement of Tech, and expand/upgrade current facilities
- Lease/purchase abandoned outside space for hosting service
- build a new data center off-site no more than a hour away (long term solution)

Comments on what the data centers should include/contain:
- constructed with “green” in mind (improved air exchange)
- within close proximity of power source
- accessible to non-experts and experts alike
- more capacity to serve web 2.0 platforms
- capacity to hold huge amounts of video and research data

Clarke volunteered to check with 2nd life companies, digital korea, etc., to set up introductions between committee members and the companies to find out what their business models are for data centers.

Mort commented that NU knows the needs and expects spending millions of dollars on data center/computing because of its importance to our research community and the administration offices.

II. Steve Beck, Director of IT Administration and Finance, reviewed the NUIIT planning process, covering the following points:

Inputs to the Planning Process
- School Technology Leaders, Deans (NUIIT senior management meets regularly, generally monthly, with technology leaders and as needed with deans.)
- NU Senior Administration (NUIIT receives requests many times off-cycle from NU senior management to consider technology needs; one recent example is the need to improve emergency and broadcast communications methods)
- IT Subcommittee of the Board of Trustees (functions in an advisory capacity, generally meeting quarterly; )
- Other Committees
- Prior Year Plans (initiatives are carried forward, modified, or discarded based on events from the most recent year)
NUIT Strategic Plan – 3 year horizon
- NUIT Fall Planning Retreat (attended by NUIT Sr. Management and Directors)
- Three-year planning horizon
- Organization of Strategic Initiatives (follows the structure of the Highest Order of Excellence II)

NUIT Annual Budget
- Planning & Budget Meeting (typically held in December; the first year of the e-year strategic initiatives identified at the planning retreat form the basis of our budget request.)
- Incremental Recurring and Non-Recurring Funds
- Establishing Priorities (priority initiatives are identified from a University-wide perspective)
- Central Allocation (as with out units, results of the budget meetings are made known to NUIT typically in April)

Other
- Operational Initiatives (these represent important projects within NUIT to improve operations and services to schools and departments that typically are self-funded and not part of the annual budget request)
- Redeployment (in addition to new funds received from the annual budgeting process, NUIT has redeployed about $300,000 annually from its existing budget to address changing technology needs)
- Off-Cycle Actions

III. Bob Taylor: Director of Academic Technologies (AT)

AT works within a broad plan:
- Meets with school technology leaders to hear what’s happening in schools and to get news of upcoming events to them
- Annual planning
- NU classroom committee processes: student classroom needs, course management/blackboard and beyond, cyber environments needed to produce consortiums driven by NIH, NSF, NASA requirements for funding

For long term planning process, AT looks at what was necessary for redeployment, what partnerships from outside funding sources lead to value interest with carry over to other projects. Decisions for funding certain projects are made in the trade-off mode. The most important initiatives (which will of course change over the course of a year), and trends are spotted.