

University Computing Standards Committee Meeting
9:30 a.m. Wednesday, October 10th, 2001
Faculty Senate Chambers, D.H. Hill Library

Steve Keto, Sam Averitt, co-chairs

Voting members present:

Pete Evans, Perry Grady, Barbara Kirby, Harriet Mermes, Scott Payne, Andy Raynor, Henry Schaffer (substitute for Tom Miller), Bill Scott, Dan Steen, John Tector

Technical advisors present:

Mardecia Bell, Debbie Carraway, Gary Case, Shawn Dunning (substitute for Mike Freeman), Charles Hunt, Ryan Jones, Tim Lowman, Carl Malstrom, Chris McCoy, Ron Melbourne, Harry Nicholos, Bill Padgett, Greg Sparks, Jennifer Van Horn, Patrick Williams

Guests:

Terry Thompson, Tyler Kendall

Welcome:

Steve Keto called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes:

The Committee unanimously approved the minutes from the July 11th, 2001 meeting.

Presentation:

• **Web Accessibility at NC State:**

Terry Thompson gave a presentation on web accessibility. In late July, he was contacted by NC State University Office of Legal Affairs to develop language for an administrative regulation on web accessibility. He said he wanted to share the draft policy statement with the Committee and to receive feedback on the language of the document. Terry identified four reasons why a policy statement on web accessibility is necessary. They are:

- 1) Federal law (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act) requires that NC State programs and services must be accessible to persons with disabilities. This includes those programs and services that are delivered via the Web.
- 2) In June 2000, Chancellor Fox signed an Agreement to Resolve three Office for Civil Rights (OCR) complaints against the University. In the agreement, NC State agreed to “ensure comparable access for students with disabilities to official University web sites.” Terry said a variety of steps have been taken to follow through with the agreement including the hiring of Tyler Kendall as a web accessibility specialist.
- 3) Despite #1 and #2, many faculty and staff who develop web content have asked for a university policy.
- 4) A policy statement provides the University with the opportunity to a) clearly state the University’s position regarding web accessibility; b) provide

specific guidance as to which set of guidelines to use in defining web accessibility, and c) provide guidance on the scope of the requirements.

Terry said the draft policy statement is now in its fourth revision and it has had limited circulation. The Office of Legal Affairs has had a key role in fine-tuning the language. There will be more revision based on the Standard Committee's and other groups' comments. Terry gave a review of the contents of the draft policy statement to the Committee members, which included the following:

I. **Definitions**

- A. **Official NC State Web Pages** are any Web pages sponsored or endorsed or created on authority of a University department or administrative unit.
- B. **An NC State Web Developer** is anyone who develops official NC State Web Pages, including but not limited to faculty, staff, students, volunteers and outside contractors.

II. **Policy Statement**

- A. North Carolina State University (hereinafter, NC State) is committed to providing equal access to its programs and services in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- B. NC State is committed to making its World Wide Web content and other electronic information accessible to persons with disabilities.
- C. All official NC State Web pages must strive to conform to the Web Accessibility standards identified within the (Federal) Access Board's Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility Standards (36 CFR Part 1194, hereinafter, the Access Board Standards). NC State maintains a Web site with the current set of standards: www.ncsu.edu/it/dss/webaccess/standards.html
- D. NC State is committed to supporting its Web developers in meeting the requirements of this policy statement. A complete set of available resources is maintained at the following Web site: <http://www.ncsu.edu/it/dss/webaccess>.

III. **Exemptions**

- A. Web pages are exempt from this policy if compliance is not reasonably attainable with current technology, or where the content or curriculum cannot be effectively delivered in an accessible format without fundamentally altering the nature of the content or curriculum.
- B. Web authors must be prepared to justify their claims of exemptions under §III(A) by demonstrating that a deliberative process was used in making this determination.
- C. NC State Web developers are not responsible for the accessibility of external sites to which their Web pages link. However, they should make a good faith effort to select sites that are accessible.

IV. Violations of Policy

- A. NC State will establish designees who actively monitor the accessibility of official NC State Web pages.
- B. As designees become aware of accessibility problems, they will make reasonable effort to notify the relevant Web developers. The Web developers must either (1) correct the identified accessibility problems in a timely fashion, or (2) justify why their site should be exempt as per §III(B).
- C. If designees receive no response or if accessibility problems are not addressed in a timely fashion, the issue may be referred to the department head.
- D. In exceptional cases, NC State reserves the right to remove inaccessible Web documents from service, in order to protect the university from legal action.

Terry also presented a handout, Web Accessibility Guidelines and Standards, which describes two primary sets of guidelines/standards for developing accessible web content. The first is the Web Content Accessibility Initiative (WAI) and the second is the Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility Standards developed by the Access Board as required by Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. The Access Board standards will be the University's standards.

Henry Schaffer said he thinks the policy is a good idea and that the University should strive to make its web pages accessible but he wonders how it actually will affect the faculty. Referencing #3B of the draft policy statement, Henry said in the case of a large number of faculty, one person can be the web author and the web development team. He asked Terry to what extent does Terry expect faculty to enter into correspondence with themselves and

document as they develop the pages. Section 3B states that “web authors must be prepared to justify their claims of exemptions under §III(A) by demonstrating that a deliberative process was used in making this determination.”

Terry said he would expect them to involve his team in getting some sort of feedback as to whether something accessible can be done.

Henry said he would recommend that that portion of the policy be redone to give some guidance. He said the majority of faculty do not have a web development team and that there needs to be some way for them to be guided into doing something legal. Also referencing #3C, Henry asked how a faculty member could actually determine whether a site to which they want to link meets these standards. Henry said he has never checked a site to see if the documents are organized so that they are readable without requiring the associated style sheets. He said he was not sure how he would do that if someone asked him to do it and yet he would be held responsible for making sure that that is so or at least making a good faith effort. He said he couldn't make a good faith effort because he does not know how to do it. Section 3B states that “NC State Web developers are not responsible for the accessibility of external sites to which their Web pages link. However, they should make a good faith effort to select sites that are accessible.”

Terry said Item C at its core is that NC State developers are not responsible for accessibility of external sites. Terry said in our own OCR discussions, that was a ruling for our particular cases. However, he said the second sentence under C was added so that people were encouraged in some way to go ahead and go that extra mile and link to accessible sites. He asked how could that section be re-phrased so that it is non-threatening but still provides encouragement.

Henry said he read, “should make a good faith effort” as an actual requirement that he does make an effort and that if he doesn't make an effort, then he hasn't met the requirement. He suggested that Terry use the word “encouraged.” He said using this list of web accessibility guidelines and standards, he would have a lot of trouble figuring out if someone else's site meets them. He said what he would probably have to do is to review the source of the pages carefully.

Harry Nicholas said most sites that are accessible and that are of great value tout that fact. He suggested that the policy be phased to state that faculty may want to seek sites that openly demonstrates or openly publicizes their accessibility.

Henry said a huge amount of research information and faculty material on the web throughout the world at universities are done by individual faculty members who do not tout or publicize the fact that they have an accessible site.

Henry said he's allergic to being given things that he should do but doesn't know how to do and he's not certain the average faculty member is as capable of investigating the site as he would be.

Terry asked Henry if he would be more comfortable if the document read that they (web developers) “should make a good faith effort.” Terry said “should” is a step down from “must.”

Harry said he’s not sure if “should” is acceptable because the document still reads you have to make a good faith effort.

Henry said he doesn’t feel comfortable engaging in wordsmithing in a large committee because it takes everybody’s time up discussing words, but he’s just trying to get a flavor of things that are making him very nervous. He said he’s concerned that if the University publishes this regulation and goes further than what is required that it will be held to the regulation.

Terry said in developing the policy, the University did not want to create any additional liability for itself but to provide guidance.

Henry asked what is it going to take to have designees to actively monitor every single page that is being made in this University by its 2,400 faculty that can use any of their Unity space.

Terry said it is impossible for any group of humans to monitor all pages. He said he was not sure that Section A (Violations of Policy) indicated that the University will cover every single page. He said the University will actively monitor in some sort of reasonable prioritization scheme, but there are some tools that can be developed and he’s looking at tools such as Spider AFS Space and Bobby-like analysis. He said he’s not sure that the language in the policy says every single web page is going to be looked at.

Henry said it was his interpretation from the draft document that the University would monitor every web page.

Scott Payne asked if funds had been designated to go back over a significant number of years to make faculty members material accessible by these standards. He asked if we were paying transcription services and asked if real media streaming was a part of these services.

Terry said LTS is specifically doing a lot of work there to determine what the University will do.

Henry said LTS has a project that is looking at how captioning can be done. LTS has made no commitment to funding the work once we see what needs to be done, he said. It’s an investigation of technology.

Terry said a group would work with the information from LTS’ investigation of technology in terms of multimedia accessibility, which is a big problem in terms of resources. According to Terry, about 90 to 95 percent of the web pages just need alt tags. The money that has been allocated has been used to hire the web accessibility specialist whose job it is to monitor web content and provide feedback, he said.

John Tector asked how long it would take from receipt of the draft to actually having a policy in place.

Terry said he wasn't sure because there are several groups that need to have an input including the Provost Office, Council of the Deans and TLTR, etc.

Pete Evans requested that the document is sent electronically.

John Tector said deliberate process should be defined in the draft. Terry said it is a legal term and it hasn't really been defined. He said he could consult with the Office of Legal Affairs about it.

Harry said in #4D, the issues of liability needed to be worked through when the order comes down to remove the content. He asked if the person running the web server becomes then liable for the timeliness of the removal of material.

Terry asked if this matters needed to be addressed in the policy statement itself. Harry said it could be addressed in a working paper on the side for the staff.

Sam said it is important that the Committee reviews and makes comments on the document. He asked them to think about how this would affect their colleges, faculty and students and make thoughtful comments.

Referencing 4A, Harry said we needed to soften it and identify the scale and scope of actively monitoring official web pages. There should be language in the document that states the University will do the best it can with the resources it has available to do it with, he said.

John said coming from a college where half of the faculty and students are learning to design web pages, he thinks that the University needs to distinguish clearly between what is official and what is play and what is expiration.

Henry said where the University is most likely to be accounted for is course content wherein students need to use the web as part of the course. That's the area where there is least support, the biggest need for training and the greatest concern.

Pete said the problem exists with developed pages because faculty members have to go back and touch every developed page.

John said any place where the University provides information has the same requirement that faculty members have.

Discussion:

- E-mail Responsibility Guidelines:

Tim Lowman said the Email Responsibility Guidelines were mailed earlier to Committee members. The guidelines included responsibilities of a postmaster, the

registration process, unsolicited commercial email, general rule set agreement and client responsibilities.

Sam said what ITD is proposing is to essentially implement a policy that is mostly implemented any way. Sam said those who run their own mail services would be integrated into a larger environment. He said IDT is setting revisions forth as requirements for campus. There were no objections or comments.

Bill Padgett said the University needed to look at tools to automatically direct student email services.

Tim said the Committee is looking at this issue and working with Lewis Hunt in Registration and Records.

- **Email Alias:**

Tim said the email alias guidelines were guidelines for @ncsu.edu addresses. They are basically a re-hash of the same standards that the University had before: <first name>_<last name>@ncsu.edu. Tim said ITD is also in the process of restructuring and adding functionality to the mail system to support a large number of features. These features were included in "An Overview of ITD's Upcoming Email System Change" that was mailed to the Committee. Phase I, occurring now, involves rewriting sendmail configuration to take advantage of virtual domaining and anti-spam filtering. In Phase II, IMAP servers will be implemented as the repository for all mail and allow IMAP, KPOP and POP protocols to all work. Phase II is scheduled to begin around Christmas of 2001. Phase III will begin in the summer of 2002. During Phase III, advanced mail processing via procmail and web forms will be implemented.

Sam proposed that the Committee reviews the document and vote to proceed forth at the next meeting.

Pete asked if the University would be losing nonconforming email.

Tim said Larry Robinson has resolved almost all of those emails. There are very few of them left.

- **Network Directory Services**

Greg Sparks said he wanted to present as a topic of discussion the possible need for a firewall. He recently visited the University of South Carolina, which is compatible in size and functionality to NC State, to discuss the benefits of a firewall for them.

Henry remarked that Georgia Tech has had for the last five years a stringent firewall policy, affecting academic users well as administrative users. He said Ron Hitchins was in charge of the area. Henry said there are a lot of problems that could arise with the research faculty use in general.

Harry said he would be interested in hearing what problem the University would solve with a firewall and he wanted to have a clear articulation of the goal of a firewall.

Sam said the state auditors have asked that everything be secured.

John said it sounds like a solution that's looking for a problem.

Greg said his question is should the Committee form a technical group to look at whether a firewall is a feasible implementation for campus or not.

Sam said in the last virus attack, the University did suffer some damage but recovered quickly. There were minimum lost of service. Sam said the State Information Technology Services' whole population is based on firewalls, but during the last virus attack, ITS was affected to such an extent that traffic overload brought down its routers for six hours.

Pete said the Committee should research the use of firewalls.

Sam said the University is improving its detective and diagnostic techniques in the absence of firewalls. He said the University needed to look at firewall for certain situations.

Ron said he would endorse the idea of a group studying the feasibility of a firewall along with a virus filter.

Sam said one of the problems the University has is site licenses. He said there's nothing wrong with looking at multiple environments with diverse requirements.

Greg said basically NCS believes strongly that it needs a firewall. ACS already has a firewall. Greg said being on the email subcommittee, we don't want to get into something where there are three, four or five different groups creating their own little domains. He said if campus groups work together upfront to develop this standard, campus would be a lot better off.

Steve asked for volunteers to look at the issue. Harry Nicholos, Ron Melbourne, Andy Raynor and Greg Sparks volunteered. Jennifer Van Horn also volunteered a representative from ComTech.

The discussion ended with Terry stating that he would e-mail the draft policy to all committee members and that any feedback/changes should be sent to him.

- **Directory Services**

Sam said Directory Services started in an ad hoc fashion, but is now a core activity of the campus. He suggested that the subcommittee is pulled out of the current ad hoc environment and empowered to establish guidelines for changes.

Debbie Carraway said there are many competing needs between academic computing users, administrative computing users, college groups, and central groups and there needed to be some formality to determine guidelines.

Greg said the subcommittee has already developed a service level agreement (SLA). He would like to have input from the Committee and a subcommittee created to review the SLA, formalize it and forward it for recommendations and approval. He also asked that the NDS Tech Group be recognized as a formal administrative subcommittee for the NDS environment.

Sam said he would like to charge Patrick Williams, who is the chair of the ad hoc committee, and three to four other people with the responsible of studying the issue and presenting findings to the Committee. Those who will serve on the Committee will be Patrick Williams, Debbie Carraway and Greg Sparks. Representatives from ACS and other groups were submitted as participants.

Topical Reports (See Attached Reports)

- Security and Disaster Recovery – Mardecia Bell
- Security and Audit Compliance issues
- Communications and Networking – Jennifer Van Horn
- Electronic Mail, Directory Services, Calendaring – Greg Sparks and Tim Galloway
- Major Administrative Systems –
 - Financials and Human Resources System – Gwen Halzehurst
(<http://www.fis.ncsu.edu/EIS/finhrupdate.doc>)
 - Student Administration – Mardecia Bell

Harriet Mermes asked how does Directory Service relate to the LDAP discussion.

Tim said Directory Service operates in an associated fashion. There is Directory Services for NDS, which is the mail directory service, and there is LDAP, which is a lightweight directory service. Tim said they operate together and they use the same protocols. He said the LDAP Technical Committee is still in discussion with the Office of Legal Affairs and will put in writing a university legally endorsed document to publish. According to Tim, there will be initial backend data that is stored in NDS but is not necessarily available to the general public. There will be a merger of the two at some point because either holds data that the other can make use of.

Steve announced that the Topical Reports were distributed with the minutes and asked for questions concerning the topical reports.

He also mentioned that since the July meeting, the University has released on the PeopleSoft Financials side new reports that replicate all of the old reports that were in the old Financial Accounting System. All of these reports are better in that they provide drill-down capabilities and expenditures and provide data keyed in a Microsoft Excel format. He encouraged anyone who is interested in looking at the reports to visit the Enterprise Information Systems (EIS) website.

Referencing the Security and Disaster Recovery Topical Report, Henry asked if a decision had been made by the University to remain with Sybase and upgrade within its product line

or if the University was considering a change.

Steve said the University is considering all of the above. He said a meeting is being held this afternoon to present about 15 different options. He commented that Sybase is not going away on the Human Resources and Financials side; however, it is going away on the Student side.

New Business:

- Open discussion
There were no new business items discussed.
- Harriet asked about support for Novell IPX and AppleTalk, which is scheduled to end on December 31, 2002, and any new information about the impact.

Jennifer Van Horn said there would be a meeting next week to develop the issue.

Next Meeting: December 12th, 2001

- The Committee voted to meet at 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, December 12th, 2001 in the Faculty Senate Chambers. The Committee will not meet at its regularly scheduled time in November.
- Email and Directory Services will be presentation items on the agenda for the December 12th meeting.