

Chief Technology Officers Meeting Minutes
September 16, 2004, 8 a.m.

Present at three video locations:

Ed Anderson, Brian Chongtai, Jeff Cox, Linda Kennedy, Jim McKinney, Don Moxley, Brooke Nielsen, Sally Phares, Lyle Pritchett, Roberta Roth, Becky Seibert, Lori Temple, Al Valbuena, Steve Zideck, Walter Ayers, Mary Dugan.

1. Conversation on Acacia Threat

Brooke, Mary and Walt reported on some research they had done concerning the letters received by four UCCSN institutions from Acacia Media Technologies Corporation, demanding payment for the use of streaming and other related technologies to which Acacia claims to hold the patents. Other educational institutions have responded in a variety of ways from paying the requested fees to forming a coalition to challenge the demand. There was uncertainty about what Acacia claims to have patented and whether it truly applies to our use of streaming technologies provided in the large number of software products for which the UCCSN is licensed. The breadth of software affected is unclear. The claim appears to apply to obviously streaming specific software such as Media Player. However, it includes other technologies, such as encryption, and might apply broadly enough to include network router software. Paying the requested fees without evidence that the UCCSN is truly liable was seen as prohibitively expensive and onerous to calculate.

Brooke provided a copy of the most recent reduced demand from Acacia for distribution to the CTO's. SCS agreed to provide Brooke with the software licenses for products which use streaming technologies and are licensed by the UCCSN. SCS will notify the CTO's of the licenses provided to Brooke so they can add any which are specific to their institutions and were not included. The General Counsel's Office will review the licenses to see to what extent the UCCSN might be indemnified from liability. However, the demand from Acacia appears to place liability on users as well as providers of the technologies in question. The question was raised about whether UCCSN researchers might be developing software tools using the technologies in question, and the CTO's said they would have no way of knowing of such experimental activity. The General Counsel's Office will also investigate the position and actions being taken by EDUCASE with respect to this threat.

2. Schedule for Future CTO Meetings

Meeting dates were established for the next three months. The October meeting will be held at the Reno DRI location on Wednesday, October 27. The meeting will begin in mid or late morning and will include lunch. The exact starting time will be set after flight schedules have been reviewed. As Wednesday appeared to be a good meeting day, the November meeting was set for the 17th and the December meeting for the 8th. Meetings will probably be scheduled in mid day. More details will be provided later.

3. Status of ERP Assessment and Planning

The CTO's had received a recent progress report on ERP planning activity. Roberta provided an update to that report. After discussions with the BCN Purchasing Office and with Buster Neel, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration, it was determined that SCS must go to bid for the Finance and Student Information parts of the assessment consulting contract. SCS will proceed with that expeditiously. The Human Resources assessment process, contracted to IBM's Business Consulting Services, will begin early in October, slightly later than planned.

There was discussion about the role of the CTO's in the assessment process. While the process is intended to focus on a needs assessment, gap analysis and case for change for each of the three primary functions--finance, human resources and student information, attention must be paid to the need for integration among these and other functions. The CTO's have an important role to play in insuring that happens. There is also a need for technical experts to be included with functional experts in the assessment process. Linda Kennedy, the Manager of SCS's newly formed Project Office, will work with the consultants to clarify the role of the CTO's. They also requested regular reports from the consultants on the status of the assessment and on issues relating to technical needs and concerns. It was pointed out that extensive campus-provided technical infrastructure is an integral part of providing functionality and will be strongly affected by the changes. The CTO's will also be asked to assist in making sure no critical stakeholders are inadvertently excluded from the assessment process. Lori requested that SCS make sure the needs of researchers are included in the assessment. Al reminded the group that the governance structure for implementation has yet to be determined and will need a lot of thought.

Becky reported that at a recent national conference she had talked with a number of campuses that had implemented ERP systems using more than one software vendor. There was concern among some CTO's that that might not facilitate the integration the UCCSN needs. Becky said she hoped the assessment process would provide the information needed to make an informed decision with respect to that decision. Some of the goals she has for the assessment process include: determining and prioritizing needs, building a case for change and for funding, becoming more familiar with the available options and range of costs, and establishing an environment of teamwork and good communication among the functional users who will face the difficult task of implementing the ERP system.

One of Becky's primary current concerns is the need to facilitate excellent communication among all stakeholders. Linda will include that in her oversight of the project. Linda explained that John Tully would be the SCS Project Manager for the assessment project and that she would be the Project Executive. Lori requested that SCS update the ERP status document provided to the CTO's, including the CTO information, so that she could make that available to her campus stakeholders.

4. Introduction of SCS Project Office Manager, Linda Kennedy

Linda was introduced during the previous discussion on ERP progress. Among her plans for the Project Office is the establishment of a governance process that will enable SCS to prioritize resources for the many project requests that are received. (Note: a future CTO meeting will include more information on Project Office plans.)

5. Spam Policy for SCS Mail Servers

Sally reported on the Ad Hoc Spam Committee recommendations. Notes from that meeting have been distributed to the CTO's. The conclusions apply to the SCS servers Pioneer and Fallon. The committee agreed that Black List filtering should continue. They also agreed that, if spam filtering was initiated, user accounts should default to "filtering on" with an easy, user controlled method for disabling filtering. They proposed three alternatives for spam filtering: 1) continue to run spam detection software but do nothing except track the statistics; 2) tag spam and provide information and tools to customers to allow them to move spam into special folders; 3) move spam into special folders by default. Number 3 was not considered to be feasible, given the wide range of client software used by customers to read their email. It was questioned whether number 1 was worth the resources required, if no action was to be taken. Number 2 was the CTO's choice. SCS will investigate implementing that option. The CTO's want to share information among campuses about solutions for isolating tagged spam mail for various client software products. It was also suggested that new releases of the Black List be reviewed to avoid blacklisting legitimate SCS entities. This has happened in the past.