

Faculty Senate Computer Committee
Final Report -- December 19, 1994

Committee Charge:

To develop a mechanism for effectively distributing information to members of the Senate and the faculty at large via the University's network.

Recommendations:

- That the Faculty Senate office continue its present methods of distribution during the spring semester while faculty/staff work station hook-ups and training are completed.
- That the Faculty Senate office establish parallel distribution system on the USC network so that the system can be tested and refined.
- That the Faculty Senate office go "on-line" at the completion of the work station hook-ups and faculty and staff training.
- That after the electronic distribution system replaces the current paper copy system, the Faculty Senate office continue to send paper copies of all relevant materials to those faculty who are members of the Senate.

Basis of the Recommendations

In developing a plan to distribute Faculty Senate publications electronically, the committee met with Patrick Calhoun and a number of consultants at the Computer Services Division. Although work stations are rapidly being added to the network and training is underway, the committee felt that electronic distribution of information would be premature until we have a more functional network and well-trained users.

As several members of the committee pointed out, the faculty and staff have often been given computer resources with little or no training--or even adequate documentation on the use of those resources. Members also noted that in a number of instances, current network configurations do not allow them access to printers within their units.

Another problem noted by Calhoun is the lack of an accurate list of faculty and staff e-mail addresses. Faculty and staff use a wide variety of email software ranging from CMS-Mail on the mainframe to Pegasus Mail on Novell networks.

In short, while USC has made great strides toward its goal of networking the campus, we are still very much in a period of transition.

Faculty Senate Office On-Line

In evaluating the material now distributed by the Faculty Senate office, the committee divided the current publications into two categories:

1) those which should be distributed to all faculty members; and 2) those which should be made available to the faculty.

Examples of first category items are the agendas and brief summaries or minutes of meetings; examples of the second are agenda-related items like committee reports as well as the extended summaries or transcripts of the meetings. First category items would be distributed by e-mail; second category items would be published on the USC Web Server Home Page for access via Mosaic. Second category material would also be accessible via the USC Gopher.

Posting on the Web Server will allow documents to be linked to each other. For example, if the agenda refers to a committee report, the agenda can contain a link which would allow the user to call up a copy of the committee's report, browse through it, and then return to the main agenda. Gopher access will allow users who cannot run Windows to review the documents, but it will not provide the linking facility of Mosaic.

Although we are recommending the use of e-mail for distributing a small number of items, the committee recognizes that this may in fact not be a long-term solution because it may over-burden the physical resources of the network. If this problem arises, all Senate items will have to be limited to publication on the USC Web Server or Gopher.

The development of a Senate discussion list was raised in a briefing with the consultants at the CSD. This would be an open forum available for faculty and staff discussion of Senate issues. At the present time, the committee recommends that this be deferred until other on-line functions are in place and running smoothly.

For The Committee



David R. Chesnutt
Chair

The Committee

Marilee Birchfield, Library--Reference
Charlie Cook, USC Sumter
Sibyl Hare, Computer Services Division
Randy Mack, Art
Manton Matthews, Computer Science
Peggy Pickels, Faculty Senate Office
John Safko, Physics and Astronomy