

Information Resources Council  
Annual Report 2005-06

The Information Resources Council met ten times during 2005-06; in addition, the IRC was invited to meet with three candidates for instructional technologist in the April. Members were Sarah Goodwin (Chair), Bob Jones, Joanne Devine, Laury Silvers, Margo Mensing, Ann Henderson [and/or Joe Stankovich], Susan Zappen, Justin Sipher, Stanley McGaughey [replaced by Phylise Banner], Beth Dupont, Mike West, Jonathan Brestoff, Cameron Dunn

This year's IRC continued to serve as a forum for different campus constituencies to raise questions and concerns about various matters related to information resources and technology. The minutes are posted on the IRC website, accessible through the Faculty Governance link on the Dean of Faculty web page. Topics of the meetings are listed below.

In addition to these regular discussions, faculty members of the IRC met with the chair in the spring to discuss the functioning of the IRC and consider ways communications and deliberations might be improved. We considered holding one more open meeting to discuss this topic with a broader group, but decided against it in the interest of time, since it was near the end of the semester and IRC members were also meeting with candidates for the position of Instructional Technologist as well as attending the candidates' open sessions when possible. We agreed to recommend to the IRC that some meeting time in the fall be devoted to the question of the effectiveness of the Council's current structure and processes.

Next year's IRC will likely be chaired by Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs, Susan Kress, a change brought about by the new administrative structure. Two key members of the IRC, the chief technology officer and the director of the library, sit on the VPAA staff, as do the Registrar and the director of the Tang Museum, a configuration that provides the context for the VPAA's leadership in the area of IT and information resources. This change in IRC chair will require a change in the Faculty Handbook, which currently stipulates that the IRC be chaired by the Dean of the Faculty. The FEC has brought a motion with that change to the faculty, and it will be voted on in the fall.

Topics of individual meetings:

9/14: General information, meeting new members, setting agenda and scribes for the semester.

10/12: E-portfolios. Beth Dupont presented a brief update on current information about and the college's interest in e-portfolios. She suggested that, given the very wide range of possibilities and needs for digital storage, the college should develop a clear statement of goals and objectives, identify priorities, foster a broader discussion and review more software options. There was a lively discussion, with no clear consensus emerging.

10/26: E-portfolios, continued. Further discussion. Beth Dupont outlined the primary categories of e-portfolios: student, pedagogical, and institutional. She also outlined four broad types: homegrown, commercial, common tools, and open source. Discussion of the advantages and disadvantages followed.

11/9: Plagiarism software. After a brief follow-up discussion of e-portfolios, in which it became clear that no consensus to pursue any options was emerging, Beth Dupont introduced a variety of tools that are available for identifying plagiarism, with particular attention to turnitin.com. Lively discussion ensued. Again, no clear consensus emerged, though it seemed that turnitin.com is a more powerful and constraining tool than we are prepared to use.

11/30: Wikis: David Hamilton, Instructional Technologist, presented an informational overview of wikis and of ways that they can be incorporated into coursework. Dan Curley and Bill Fox also spoke briefly about their use of wikis in coursework.

12/14: Discussion of IT capital budget for 06-07. Justin Sipher provided a list and led a discussion of major capital requests in the budget.

1/31: NITLE: Justin Sipher presented a brief history of NITLE (National Institute for Technology and Liberal Education), which until now has been funded by Mellon and is now looking for participating colleges to take over the role of funding it. Discussion of our potential participation followed. [The college decided subsequently to sign on for two years.]

2/14: Computer classrooms: Justin Sipher opened discussion of the shortage of computer classrooms for hands-on use, as the number of faculty and disciplines requiring such classrooms continues to grow. He presented, and the Council discussed, several options for finding more space or making better use of existing space.

2/28: Digital assets management: Beth Dupont, Lisa Aronson, and Andy Ashton reported on their participation in a NITLE conference on digital assets management and on our need to begin comprehensive planning for DAM. The Council agreed that we should establish a task force [subsequently established].

3/28: Instructional technologies: Justin Sipher updated the council on the search in progress for a new instructional technologist; he then presented a summary of his thinking about instructional technology and opened it up for questions and discussions.

4/11: GIS: Bob Jones gave an update on the activities in the GIS center, including student, faculty and institutional projects. In addition, Justin Sipher presented the rationale for a proposed change in policy on email accounts for family members. The committee felt this appeared to make sense and supported Justin taking this to the IPPC.

Sarah Goodwin,  
Chair, IRC, 2005-06