Joint meeting with Facilities, Support Services and Technology Committee

February 17, 2010, 5925 Woodward, Room 292

Judith Whittum-Hudson, Acting Chair (Joe Artiss, FSST Chair was ill)

Attending from FSST: P. Parajuli, J. Sawasky, D. Charbonneau, T.R. Reddy, N. Sarhan, D. Wildman, B. Madigan, T. Allen, J. Whittum-Hudson.

Absent with Notice: J. Artiss, J. Lanza, T. Roumayah, T. Somers, K. Browne

Absent: S. Peters, D. Rappolee, , T. Stemmler , D. Golodner.

Attending from FAC: Professors Crossland, Padmanabhan, Yamazaki

Guest: T. Holt, P. Gossman, G. Hoffman

1.   Call to order

The joint meeting was called to order at 2:03 pm by Judith Whittum-Hudson, acting chair. Joe Artiss, Facilities, Support Services and Technology Committee (FSST) Chair was ill and did not attend the meeting.

2.   C&IT update on campus security systems

Joe Sawasky, (FSST Administration Liaison and WSU CIO) introduced deputy CIO Patrick Gossman and Chief Tony Holt from the Wayne State Police who described a new campus video monitoring system that coordinates indoor and outdoor monitoring by the WSU police department. Software for this system can be set to monitor movement in specific places and in specific directions or to sort through archived video using these settings. Outdoor video monitoring systems can zoom in upon license plate numbers or zoom out for panoramic views. Additional cameras will be added for fuller campus coverage. It is important to get out the word that we have an up-to-date security system at WSU: Student safety is a big concern to parents when considering enrolling their child at WSU.

3.   FSST minutes from January meeting

The minutes of the January FSST meeting were approved.

4.   Blackboard (Bb)

Both FSST and FAC brought some issues with Bb and Pipeline to the attention of the CIO. The FAC presented a list of issues regarding Bb to the CIO, although noting that many of the issues arose during the Fall Semester and may have been remedied by now. However, the FAC pointed out that the faculty and staff wondered why the Bb system went down in the fall, when it should have had enough power to serve everyone on campus. The CIO pointed out that a Bb survey

conducted last spring (prior to the latest version of Bb being implemented) showed a high level of satisfaction with Bb and a desire not to pursue other information management systems such as open source systems. The new version of Bb was expected to run well. The CIO said that problems with the new version of Bb resulted from the company trying to combine two other information management systems acquired by Bb in the previous year or so. The hasty amalgamation of these systems now requires several times the server capacity of the old system, created a number of software problems and forced the crash when the system was used intensely. He assured the committees that Bb was under pressure from WSU and other clients to fix their product. Several software updates were made in the fall following the system failure at the beginning of the term, more storage capacity added and 2.5 FTE were added in the help desk to solve problems for the students and faculty. He also made a plea to faculty and staff to make themselves available to try out new versions of Bb in order to find potential problems before the system is released to the entire campus.

Prof. Padmanabhan said that many students were having trouble using different versions of browsers (e.g., Explorer), there are problems downloading materials from Bb onto classroom teaching computers and that faculty had problems uploading their teaching rosters to Bb. The CIO said that he and others have pressured Bb to fix the browser issue. C&IT is working on ways to link Bb and Banner so that data can pass between both systems but this is a difficult task and progress has been slow. Prof. Yamazaki pointed out that the most recent version of Bb will not allow him to upload large files from off campus. The CIO said he would look into a solution.

5.   Tour of C&IT

At the conclusion of the formal part of the meeting, the CIO took the group on a very impressive tour of the C&IT building to see the housing of the servers, information backup equipment, 24/7 monitoring of the information system equipment, battery and gas generator power backup systems and the power conditioning facilities.

6.   Adjourn

The meeting adjourned approximately 4:15 pm

Attach: Q&A for C&IT

1. Why can't we go back to a previous version of Bb which worked better?
   Once an upgrade is implemented it is technically not possible to go back to a previous version.

2. Why did the system crash in the fall if it was expected that everyone should be using it? Why didn't it have enough capacity?
   The Blackboard system outages in the fall were the result of a power problem in the Computer Room and performance constraints that required an upgrade of the databases and the disk storage system. Our servers were sized to accommodate an annual growth of about 10%, whereas we experienced approximately 25% growth, requiring emergency actions to meet demand. We are scheduled to replace all of the servers this summer.

3. Why can't we contact Bb corporate directly with our problems?
   Blackboard Inc, like most software companies with a large volume of users, puts a limit on the number of support contacts from each customer(we have 3 named contacts). We route all of our support issues through our Blackboard system administrator and her backup.

   Our Blackboard support staff, bbadmin, attempt to solve the problems before escalating them to Blackboard Inc. The problem solving process includes recreating the problem, researching various solutions, possibly creating a work around, and communicating the problem to others. Problems that are escalated to Blackboard Inc generally fall into two categories, product defects or enhancements.

   You can make suggestions for enhancements directly to Blackboard Inc at http://www.blackboard.com/Company/Feedback/Suggest-Product-Enhancements/For-Learn.aspx

4. Students have trouble accessing grades.
   a. **Official grades are posted in Pipeline, not Blackboard. Pipeline is the authoritative source for viewing final grades.**
   b. **If students are having trouble viewing grades, instructors may want to check their Grade Center to make sure the column(s) are not hidden from student view. If a student continues to experience trouble he/she should contact the C&IT Help Desk for additional assistance.**

5. Sometimes waiting a few days for an answer is too long – students/faculty may need a fix for a problem very quickly.
Additional resources have been made to the Blackboard support team and the email and voicemail is monitored very closely. If you think an answer is taking too much time to obtain, please contact Cindy Sulad at 7-9747 or csulad@wayne.edu.

6. Problems with submitting digitized pictures along with the text in new version. Students need to upload reports with many or large figures.
This could be two different issues. Students may not be clicking "attach file" before clicking on "submit." Provide this link to your students for further instructions:

http://www.screencast.com/t/ZDAxMjNhND
If the file is over 30 Mb, a student's connection may not stay active for the full transfer of data.

7. Can't upload videos so that students can click on link to view.
While Blackboard is capable of embedding media files, it is our experience that the most successful file type to use is the QuickTime movie file (.mov).

8. Faculty have had trouble with "Drop Box" not accepting students' papers requiring them to be sent directly to the instructor.
The "Drop Box" is no longer available in the current version of Blackboard. Students may not be clicking "attach file" before clicking on "submit." Provide this link to your students for further instructions:

http://www.screencast.com/t/ZDAxMjNhND

9. Browser Problems:

   a. Can't download Expedia files and PowerPoint forms from Internet Explorer
   The information bar in Internet Explorer prevents automatic file downloads. By disabling your information bar, your files will then download. Follow these steps:

   1.Click to open Internet Explorer.

   2.Click the **Tools** button, and then click **Internet Options**.

   3.Click the **Security** tab, and then click **Custom** level.

   4. Scroll to the Downloads section of the list, and then, under Automatic prompting for file downloads, click Enable.

5.Click **OK**, click **Yes** to confirm that you want to make the change, and then click **OK** again.

b. Bb Admin told people to use Firefox but that hasn't worked well either – have to keep trying different browsers.

Firefox is the recommended browser that facilitates most functions in Blackboard. We are anticipating the browser problems will fixed once Service Pack 3 is installed, which should be in the early summer time frame.

10. Pictures in document are formatted in a peculiar form.
More information is needed.

11. Difficult to register students in course.
Students are automatically enrolled in their respective courses after they officially register for them. If a student is making up an incomplete or auditing the course instructors can use the Add Users by Role tool to enroll the student in the course.

12. Problem designating or maintaining designation of "instructor" – Bb keeps changing designation to student.
Does someone else have TA or Instructor privileges to the course that could be changing the roles? The Blackboard Support Team has not heard of this problem.

13. Students – older version of IE upload/download
See 9a. Internet Explorer 6 will not work properly in Blackboard.

14. Faculty – Uploading roster into Web assign – new feature possible?
You can make suggestions for enhancements directly to Blackboard Inc at http://www.blackboard.com/Company/Feedback/Suggest-Product-Enhancements/For-Learn.aspx

15. File size and zipping – students don't always have zip
In Windows, right click on a file or folder. One of the options in the context menu is "send to," and an option under that is "compressed 'zipped' folder." Once you click on this a zip file is created.

Blackboard support services and resources can be found at:

http://computing.wayne.edu/blackboard/bb-support-faculty.php