NEWS TICKER

Campus starts Gmail pilot for students . . . wireless network access is getting better . . . new Health System CIO lists some goals . . .

See the wrapup on PAGES 2, 3



TAKE A LOOK

We asked two design students to create a fresh illustration for some familiar, useful services

Images on PAGE 3



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Cell-phone users who have tried to make a call on campus, only to get a blank "no bars" icon on their phones, have not been hard to find. As part of ET Partners, third-year sociology major Suphain Htaung has dealt with technology on campus, and says cell coverage is one area that is lacking.

As captain of an intramural volleyball team, she once sent text messages to her players about an upcoming game. Poor coverage kept one player from receiving the text, so she did not make the match.

"We ended up playing with only four players on what's supposed to be a six-player game," Htaung said.

People on campus rely on cell coverage for school, work, or, like Htaung, for play. The Virginia Tech tragedy last year reminded all schools that the ability to communicate across campus is also a vital safety issue. But until recently, the only cell site on campus was west of Highway 113-too far to decently cover many places on campus.

The campus acknowledges that cell phone coverage has been "spotty" and needs to improve. And now it is.

"Spotty coverage has been a result of several factors involving construction standards and policies governing the installation of commercial services on campus,"

said Mark Redican, manager of the Network Operations Center for Communications Resources, a unit of Information and Educational Technology. "Over the past few years, with the increased popularity of cellular service, policies have started to change, and technological advances have addressed the construction-related issues."

2008 should see significant gains.

Here come the new cell sites

Communications Resources and the campus Real Estate Services department spent part of 2007 negotiating with the four major cellular service vendors-Verizon,

AT&T, Sprint, and T-Mobile-to install cell sites on campus to boost service.

"Each vendor was given the core campus map and told to submit their prospective locations based upon their assessment of their cellular signal coverage on campus," said Zack O'Donnell, service manager for Communications Resources. "The campus then reviewed the proposed locations for power, telecom, and structural integrity, and gave a 'go' or 'no go.'

Verizon signed a deal with the campus to lease space by the North Entry garage,

See Cell Phones, page 3

A natural friend OF TECH

Professor Caroline Bledsoe didn't start out as a technologist, but when she saw what IT could do for her work, she became a big advocate. That interest has helped shape the use of tech at UC Davis.

One day in the early 1970s, Professor Caroline Bledsoe remembers, her husband brought home a metal box with blinking lights, small screen and keyboard. It was a primitive home computer. She was a soil microbiologist, not a technologist. She was not impressed.

"He could program it, but there was no way to get anything out of it," Bledsoe says. "And I wasn't interested in it at all. It was sitting in the middle of the living room, and I thought, 'Why do we have this?'

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Then her husband added a printer, and

Photo: Sam Wo

she saw potential. A printer meant information *in* the machine could come *out*. She recalled the anxiety of typing her doctoral thesis in 1970, when an omission or change on a page meant having to retype every page that followed. Writing on a computer would make any document much easier to produce.

That was only the start of what information technology would help her achieve as she continued her career in soil and plant sciences.

That career brought Bledsoe to UC Davis 17 years ago. Four years ago, when the campus formed the Campus Council for Information Technology from two predecessor groups, she became its chair. The council (its nickname is pronounced "C.C. Fit") advises on educational and information technology and its use at UC Davis to support instruction, research, administration, and public service. Specifically, the council advises Information and Educational Technology Vice Provost Pete Siegel and Interim Provost Barbara Horwitz. CCFIT helps them make decisions, assign priorities, and set goals.



Its recommendations matter. The council is the main place on a large and decentralized campus where people representing the many parts of UC Davis can evaluate an IT initiative from their diverse perspectives, according to their interests. When students ask for more wireless coverage at the Silo or MU, here's where they make their point and discuss why the campus should make it a priority.

With information technology spreading further into campus life, and the need for tech coordination increasingly clear, the person who chairs CCFIT can become a leading voice in shaping the direction of UC Davis.

Bledsoe will retire in June, and signed off as CCFIT chair at the end of 2007. She will stay on the council until June to support and provide continuity to the council and its new chair, Francois Gygi (see related story, page 4). Bledsoe talked with IET senior writer and editor Bill Buchanan late last November, in her office and lab on the third floor of Plant and Environmental Sciences, where she discussed her career and what comes next.

Steering the spread of wireless

How does CCFIT work? Council members suggest topics they're interested in investigating, or a sponsor or a group on campus will say, 'We're thinking about developing this proj-

Caroline S. Bledsoe

Title: Professor of soil microbiology, and soil microbiologist

Department: Land, Air and Water Resources

Recent courses taught: Trees and Forests,

Culinary and Medicinal Herbs

At UC Davis, she has previously chaired the Joint Campus Council for Information Technology and, several years later, the Academic Campus Coordinating Council. (She and others eventually recommended the dissolution of the first council as ineffective. That led to the formation of the second council, as well as the similarly named Administrative Campus Coordinating Council. Eventually those two merged, creating the Campus Council for Information Technology.)

READ MORE:

Learn more about her work at *lawr.ucdavis.edu/directory_faculty.htm.*

managers or management services officers], federation faculty and Academic Senate faculty, and other administrative units.

The council is large, but information technology touches all of us on campus, and there are all kinds of interconnections. It is important to have everybody all there together.

ect, we'd like to come to talk to you about it and get your feedback.' Sponsors come, give a presentation to the council, and get a lot of questions from a very diverse membership-we have undergraduates, graduate students, staff, ADMAN [administrative

Why would someone bring a project to CCFIT? Why wouldn't they say, 'We'll just do this work within our own area?' They might say, 'Oh, I better run it

See Bledsoe, page 4

Spelling is basic, engine skills aren't. Where does tech fall on that list?



I can't decide if this is just an example of friends helping each other out, or a refusal to learn basic skills now that most of us write with computers. Either way, it raises an interest-

by Bill Buchanan

ing question. So I'll put it out here for others to chew over.

Two months ago I was talking to Fernando Socorro, the energetic soon-to-bePhD in Cultural Studies who has signed on as the campus's newest faculty tech trainer. He has TA'd or taught about 15 classes, here on campus and in San Francisco.

As an instructor, sometimes he comes up against the "a friend will do it" attitude.

Here's a sample. He gets a paper in Microsoft Word from a student. Only the paper isn't formatted correctly; it uses tabs, or maybe multiple hits on the space bar, instead of indents to situate copy on the page. When Socorro challenges the student to get it right—part of the drill, after all, is using the right format—the student shrugs and tells Socorro, "I don't need to know how to do that. A friend does it for me."

So here's the question: how much do we need to know about the technological tools we use? If I can't apply basic formats in widely used Word, is that feeble, like not knowing how to spell—"I don't need

to spell, 'cause a spell checker does that for me"—or is it more like driving, where it's totally acceptable that I find someone else to tune my car?

Where's the line?

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With advanced computing technology making further inroads into just about everything, wherever the line falls, it's moving.

I don't think a universally correct response exists, but Socorro has interesting answers, and it's now his job to teach technological skills to people at UC Davis. So we talked about it.

Socorro has no doubt about Word. He expects his students who use that software to know how to format a paper with it. (He's also precise about writing, and says he has even stopped using contractions in all but his most casual email, to make his writing match academic style. The details matter to him.)



Fernando Socorro

It's essential to know how to use common tools, he said, and for students

See Training, page 3

SmartSite settles in, collects ideas for new features

One of SmartSite's strong points is that it can adapt to whatever UC Davis needs. In fall 2007 the campus started to get a more specific idea of what that means.

Program manager Kirk Alexander is keeping a list of most-requested features—tasks that faculty, staff and students would like SmartSite to do, but which it can't do yet. That list will help the campus decide which tools SmartSite adds next.

Creating the list is part of SmartSite's evolution as it settles in as the main online collaboration and course-management system for UC Davis. The system, based on Sakai open-source software developed and used by more than 100 universities and similar institutions, ended an 18month pilot last summer. Faculty, staff and students use the system to manage coursework (through course sites) or to work together on projects (through project sites).

The requests for new features will get sifted starting this quarter with the help of a new faculty advisory committee that should be formed soon.

The SmartSite group, part of Information and Educational Technology, spent several weeks at the start of fall quarter improving the core system and fixing a couple of flaws that emerged as demand from users grew. Access to SmartSite was spotty for a week early in the quarter because of the frequency of updates it received from the Banner student records system, and because of the way that processing was structured. That problem has been fixed.

The group has also fixed a bug in the assignments tool, plus remedied all but one situation that caused users to get a white screen when they logged in. The group is still working on solving that last situation.

Several universities have recently focused on improving the stability of the core system as use of Sakai grows, Alexander added. Campuses are free to add their own features to Sakai, and other universities can adopt those features if they want. The goal is to create a system that's easy to change as colleges develop new needs for their course-management systems.

At UC Davis, the most-requested features include new grading and quizzing options; making it easier for TAs to create sites for their instructors; and access for guests without UC Davis identification (the Web-based temporary affiliate service, already in the works, will be one option for

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giving non-UC Davis guests access to sites). Other changes are also coming, including the formation of the faculty advisory committee to help set priorities, an upgrade to the next Sakai release in June, and integration with Adobe's online meeting software Connect Pro.

SmartSite will replace the course-management tools offered through the MyUCDavis Web portal. The campus expects to retire those tools starting in September, although

data from MyUCDavis course sites will be archived in case it is needed in the future. The faculty advisory committee will help establish a direction for SmartSite, and will review options for how and when to retire the course tools in MyUC-

Meanwhile, the faculty technology training program acquired a new trainer last fall: Fernando Socorro. He succeeds Leslie Madsen-Brooks, who now works for the Teaching Resources Center. (Read more about Socorro on *Page 1.*) The campus will continue to offer

Davis.

SmartSite training courses and support options in 2008, including new workshops on preparing for online grading and quizzing.

And, to help spread the word about what the program can do, the SmartSite group has offered to visit departments and administrative groups to talk about how SmartSite can specifically help that unit. Send an email to smartsitehelp@ucdavis.edu.

LEARN MORE:

Get more information about SmartSite at smartsite.ucdavis.edu.

A SmartSite Q&A with Jon Bower, a grad student and TA in atmospheric sciences in Land, Air and Water Resources

How are you using your SmartSite course sites? Primarily for distributing course materials, and for grading.

Once quizzes or exams are taken in class, we grade them, and then enter the scores into SmartSite. We have the GradeBook broken down just as described in the course syllabus, which is a nice way for students to see their grades represented in a manner consistent with the course outline. For example, we have subheadings for exams, quizzes, and participation. Each of these is given a percent contribution to the overall score. Each item is scored and placed within these bins.

I uploaded course materials using the Resources tool. Updates or new materials (such as quiz/exam keys) can be announced through the convenient "email announcement" to the class list. That way everyone stays current.

Which features or tools would you recommend to instructors or TAs who want to manage their courses online

Both of these tools (GradeBook and Resources) have worked well. I really like GradeBook; it's a nice way to give immediate feedback to students. I haven't really used too much else.

Which features would you include in a future version of SmartSite?

It would be nice to see a bit more statistics available in GradeBook (e.g., standard deviation, median, high/low score, etc.).

READ MORE:

To read other comments from people who have used SmartSite, go to smartsite.ucdavis.edu.

Science meets art

Technology helped blend art and science last fall in "COLLAPSE (suddenly falling down)," a stage performance at the Mondavi Studio Theatre that addressed the demise of structures and civilizations, as well as more subtle losses of faith or hope. The piece included the use of 3-D visualization technology, and listed six UC Davis academics as science collaborators. Sacramento Bee writer Jim Carnes called it "a sensory experience that is as confounding as it is enlightening." TechNews posted a story about it, available only online.

Learn more about the technological side of campus news and events-and other UC Davis tech information not always available elsewhere-from TechNews, a free service from Information and Educational Technology. Search, read or subscribe to weekly emails at technews.ucdavis.edu.

A TechNews highlight

CAMPUS TECH*Wrapup*

The system can

sense when an

access point

has stopped

from nearby

access points to

close the gap.

That's the 'self-

healing' part.

NEW EQUIPMENT BOOSTS WIRELESS ACCESS ON CAMPUS

The addition of more access points in Shields Library, software with "self-healing logic," and a tryout of new outdoor networking equipment should improve wireless access to the Interne in several areas of campus during the first part of 2008.

"It's all designed to improve wireless network services for the campus community," says Mark Redican, NOC manager for Communications Resources, "and make our wireless network more robust for current and future applications."

By February, the Communications Resources unit of Information and Educational Technology plans to finish replacing the 270 Cisco wireless access points it now manages with equipment made by Aruba Networks Inc. That's the first part of the change, and it will standardize existing MoobileNet services, bringing improved security, coverage and reliability.

The new equipment includes a nice step up from the old: It is centrally controlled from IET's Network Operations Center by software that automatically adjusts the access points' radio channels and signal strength to create maximum wireless coverage.

Also, the system can sense when an access point has stopped working. When that happens, it boosts signals from nearby access points to close the gap. That's the "self-

healing" part, and should minimize wireless disruptions caused when an access point temporarily stops working or gets blocked by another signal. (Some cordless desk phones, microwaves and other environmental factors can disrupt wireless access.)

Communications Resources has installed the new equipment in the common areas of Shields Library and Mrak Hall. Shields has also received 71 additional access points, boosting the library's total to 85. Additional wireless deployments are in progress or planned for Kemper Hall, the Genome and Biomedical Sciences Facility, and several buildings within the veterinary school. Various small-scale efforts are also under way to install additional access points in common areas throughout the campus.

Those improvements will take place inside. Outside, the Network Operations Center will spend the next few months experimenting with "mesh" wireless networking equipment that should expand outdoors areas covered by Moobilenet and MoobilenetX, the campus wireless network.

Mesh equipment is usually installed in places, such as the top of a light pole, which lack wired connections to the campus network infrastructure. It uses a wireless link to reach the infrastructure (the inside access points usually have a wired connection), and will broadcast Moobilenet and MoobilenetX the same way the inside access points do.

Service should improve starting with the finish of the initial Aruba deployment in February. For more information about wireless in general, visit wireless.ucdavis.edu.

More information about the general expansion of wireless on campus, including a set of principles for setting priorities, is contained in a Campus Council for Information Technology subcommittee report available at ccfit.ucdavis.edu/agenda/wireless recom 100807.doc.

GMAIL PILOT FOR STUDENTS STARTS IN JANUARY

The campus has invited 500 undergraduate and graduate students, randomly selected across academic classes, majors and most colleges, to try Gmail as their UC Davis email program for about eight weeks starting in mid-January. If the tryout meets campus objectives, the Google email service might be offered to all UC Davis students starting this fall.

Information and Educational Technology, seeking a better set of email features for students, started examining options last spring. It held forums, surveys and focus groups with students, as well as discussions with campus groups, leading to this month's pilot with Google.

Students who use the system will notice significant changes from the current Web-based email system. They include more storage for messages (Google offered 5GB per account as of December, several times larger than the campus's 40MB); an ability to access email from cell phones, BlackBerries and other mobile devices; and the option to use tools in Google Apps, such as the calendar.

The participants will keep their @ucdavis.edu address, and be able to access their accounts from the MyUCDavis Web portal or directly through the UC Davis Gmail Web site. Tech support for Gmail will be available through IT Express, the computing services help desk; support for Google Apps will come from Google. Students will be surveyed several times during the pilot to see how the service is working for them. The campus will evaluate

pilot@ucdavis.edu.

CAMPUS TO INSTALL NEW EMAIL ANTI-VIRUS PROGRAM

Come February, the campus expects to install a leading anti-virus program known for an ability to detect phishing attacks-those fraudulent attempts to trick people into disclosing account numbers and other personal information online. The ClamAV software, designed specifically to scan email for viruses at mail gateways, will replace a similar virus-scanning product by Trend Micro Inc. that the campus expects to stop using before its contract ends in June. The scans will not delay any messages, said Jatinder Singh, infrastructure systems manager in

the Data Center and Client Services section of Information and

Educational Technology. The program fits well with the campus email architecture, Singh said, and many universities use it. ClamAV will scan all messages routed through the campus email service. Email users and system administrators won't have to do anything; the change will happen at the Data Center.

working. When Several campus groups had a hand in choosing ClamAV, that happens, it including the email architecture group and the Technology Infrastructure Forum security subcommittee. boosts signals

The software spots phishing scams by comparing messages against various signatures and lists of known URLs, which are updated several times daily to detect the newest attacks. In most other respects, ClamAV works similarly to Trend Micro, and will continue to help protect UC Davis email from fraud and abuse. Read more at clamav.org.

(If you use a computer or PDA, you also have a role in keeping the campus free of computer viruses by following the cyber-safety policy and installing anti-virus software on individual computers: read more at security.ucdavis.edu/csb_viruses.cfm.)

NEW HEALTH SYSTEM CIO PLANS TECHNOLOGY IMPROVEMENTS

The UC Davis Health System has named Mike Minear as its chief information officer. Minear, who started the job Nov. 5, was chosen for his extensive experience in leading health care information systems. He directs about 500 staff employees

cation and clinical research.

The job includes working with the main Davis campus to create and support partnerships and joint projects, especially to assist collaboration between the Sacramento and Davis campuses in research and teaching.

"We will have a focus on faculty, staff, and patient technology needs, and work to remove any barriers that make it difficult to use our technologies," Minear said. "Joint projects and interaction will focus on teaching and research, with emphasis on administrative systems, computer/network security, and technology infrastructure." Campus Chief Information Officer Pete Siegel, who has been consulting with Minear since Minear was chosen for the position last fall, was impressed by his fast grasp of his new job.

Siegel said they're both strongly interested in several areas, including working together on identity management; a common security road map and strategy; a common strategy on networking, data centers and to support research computing; and sharing licensing and services with IET and other groups on campus. Minear is the first CIO of the Sacramento-based UC Davis Health System. He was previously senior vice president and CIO of the University of Maryland's Medical Center, where he was

praised for modernizing its clinical information sys He has also been a faculty member at Johns Hopkins University, where he designed and taught a graduate-level course called "Health Management Information Systems," and has worked as CIO of both the University of Minnesota Hospital and Clinic and the Park Nicollet Health System in St. Louis Park, Minn.

FREE AND DISCOUNTED SOFTWARE AVAILABLE

The campus is many things, even a place where you can find a few deals on software. Free anti-virus and bibliographic software, as well as discounted products, are available through the Software License Coordination (SLC) unit of Information and Educational Technology, and now Adobe has temporarily lowered prices on certain Adobe products available from TechHub at the UC Davis Bookstore for faculty and staff.

Until March 15, 2008, Adobe will let faculty and staff buy several Adobe student licenses—Adobe Design Premium for \$339, for example, or Adobe Web Premium for \$229. Get details from TechHub at 530-752-1945.

Details about the SLC deals, which offer software products to students, staff, faculty, and departments at negotiated discounts, are available through the SLC office. Learn more at my.ucdavis. edu/software, or send questions to software@ucdavis.edu. Sophos Anti-virus software and EndNote bibliographic software are free to students, faculty and staff. These products are available at the SLC site (my.ucdavis.edu/software), and on the Internet Tools CD available for free at the IT Express Computing

Services Help Desk in Shields Library.



227 course sites

585 project sites

SmartSite

Total number of sites

created year to year



the results and offer a recommendation this spring. Read more at gmail.ucdavis.edu, and send questions or comments to ucdgmail-

and oversees an overall annual operating budget of \$50 million, plus a yearly capital budget exceeding \$10 million. His plans

include investing in advanced information technology, which increasingly determines the quality of health care, as well as edu-

Training (from page 1)

and professionals, ordinary word-processing software is essential. That's because writing is hard enough already. When you're writing, you don't want to fuss with the word-processing software any more than you want to fumble with your turn signal when changing lanes on the freeway.

"If you are already thinking about what you have to write," Socorro said, "mulling over how you are going to format it and write it properly just makes everything more complex.'

Well, then maybe that means the student who asks a friend to format the paper is OK. The student focuses on the writing, and delegates the formatting. Isn't that just sharing skills?

No way, Socorro said.

"The sharing of skills is different from the apathetic laziness that simply depends on others to do stuff for you," he said.

So when is tech knowledge optional? That depends on the individual and context. Socorro said the latest social networking tools, for example, might not be optional for younger students. The tools can help those students "build community and reinforce and discover who they are," he said. "Such venues can be instructive and uplifting, even comforting.'

"Of course, they can be a cool waste of time, and also dangerous.

But for young users who can properly express themselves through writing, he said, social networking tools can help them "present a powerful image of who they are as people, as possible future fully empowered citizens." "Actually, I do not think there is much knowledge out

Winter 2008 • IT Times • 3 there that I would consider optional," Socorro said. "There needs to be a balanced use of much of the information-a balance fomented by familiarity with the tools. And it all depends on the context."

When we talked in early November, Socorro hadn't begun teaching his tech seminars for Information and Educational Technology. He had just started his job, and was working part-time so he could finish teaching classes and wrap up his doctorate. He was talking to different groups about what they want from the training. It'll probably include translating the jargon. It usually does. "I'm a tech geek. I love all this stuff," he said. "And I

know a lot of people aren't that interested." Socorro, 53, was born in Cuba, grew up in Florida,

moved to San Francisco in 1994, got a bachelor's degree in Social Science Interdisciplinary Studies from San Francisco State University in 1999, then came here to get his PhD. At UC Davis he has taught two courses: one on race and ethnicity, one on cultural representations of women.

He's expansive and thoughtful. I expect his tech classes will be pretty useful. And if you're supposed to know Word, and don't? Don't expect him to tell you it's OK. He really wants you to know what you need to know.

Bill Buchanan, a senior writer and editor in the Information and Events area of Information and Educational Technology, writes this column for each issue of the IT Times. Write him at wrbuchanan@ucdavis.edu.

SO, WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

Go to ittimes.ucdavis.edu/survey and tell us how you'd answer that question. If we get enough answers, we'll discuss the results in TechNews.



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Even useful information, once it's familiar, can lose its impact. So we constantly look for ways to illustrate our stories, facts and figures, to help make our information more engaging. As part of that ongoing effort, we asked our current student designers, John "Leejay" Abucayan and Richard Wylie, to create illustrations that highlight a service of campus technology. Leejay chose the wide availability of wireless access on campus; Rich, the helpful souls at IT Express, the computing services help desk. (Remember the number? It's 530-754-HELP [4357].) Don't be surprised if these images pop up elsewhere in IET sites and publications.

Why did you create this image? Leejay: One reason was the growing popularity of laptops here at UC Davis, and of using wireless anywhere, including the Quad. The Egghead pretty much symbolizes Davis, so that could be any UCD student. I put the cutouts of the buildings in the background to generalize the idea that you can use wireless anywhere on campus.

Rich: I chose IT Express, because lots of students use it and anyone could understand it. That way I could be more abstract with it, as a subject. The phone is the most personalized way you could represent a person, without using a person. (If you have a person in there, they're going to be the focus, and I wanted to focus on the subject.) I like using collages. To give the phone more energy, I combined it with a collage of photos representing the different services represented by IT Express.



Cell phones (from page 1)

and was due to have its site built and functioning by the first of the year. Sprint also signed a contract, and has started construction of its cell site atop the Chemistry Annex Building.

AT&T and T-Mobile subscribers will have to wait a bit longer. AT&T's plans were due to be approved by the end of 2007, with construction to be completed in the first half of 2008. T-Mobile recently finalized its contracts, and its cell site construction should start in the later half of 2008.

Better on the inside, too

The vendors' cell sites should improve coverage inside nearby buildings. But people who don't buy their coverage from any of these wireless companies, or who still can't get a signal inside buildings, might also see better service on campus. That's because IET is looking at the possibility of installing "vendor neutral" coverage amplification systems to boost coverage in certain buildings. Currently, inside coverage depends on the density of the building and how close the user is to a cell site. Certain buildings are better than others at allowing signals to

"I don't get any service in buildings like Olson—not even on the top floor, forget the basement- Everson, Wellman, [or Shields] Library, just to name a few," Htaung said.

Vendor neutral amplification systems would improve coverage in structures like these, and be installed where needed most. Though these systems are expensive, IET is working to propose funding models to support such installations in the future.

Construction specification plans for future buildings on campus are being revised to reserve money for amplification systems. If coverage in a building promises to be poor, the funds to improve coverage will be available, and vendor-neutral systems can be installed.

No towers or microwave dishes

The fees the companies pay to lease cell sites on campus will be reinvested in the campus UCDNet3 telecommunications system.

The campus told the vendors they could not block sight lines. As a result, the sites will sit atop light poles and buildings instead of in separate towers. The sites will carry signals over T-1 land lines instead of microwave dishes, often regarded as ugly.

"We hope for more upgrades ahead," O'Donnell said. "Once the sites are working and the new coverage can be assessed, UC Davis will meet with each vendor to discuss further improvements to coverage."

O'Donnell can be reached for questions at zmodonnell@ucdavis.edu.



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Bledsoe (from page 1)

by CCFIT because I bet Pete Siegel will ask me, "Have you considered so and so, or have you asked the advice of this broad council? Because that will let me know you've done your homework and others have had a chance to weigh in." The provost might say something similar.

Another reason is that they want it to be a good project and to serve the users, and this is a way to find out what the users think.

Increasing wireless coverage on campus is an example. Dave Klem [director of Communications Resources] in IET wanted to work out priorities for where to expand wireless next. So he came to CCFIT. CCFIT thought that this is really important, set up a work group, and selected the chair-Matt Bishop, a faculty member in the Computer Science Department whose research deals with wireless technology.

The wireless work group met regularly for several quarters, and gave a report to CCFIT in October (available at ccfit.ucdavis.edu). The work group gave homework to the council, some questions about wireless. The council members will consult their constituents and return with comments in January.

So you develop a good, broad review of the wireless plan.

The real key is that people consult their groups. It's part of closing the loop. If they don't consult with their constituents, and then report back to CCFIT, the process doesn't work. We ask each representative to provide a

report from their constituency. You'll find all their reports from previous years on the Web site.

Can we talk?

The council produced about two dozen recommendations, and discussed about three dozen items, in 2006-07. Where has the group had its greatest impact?

One of my personal favorites is helping IET and other administrative units to recognize the critical importance of systems being able to 'talk' to other systems on campus and share data. We call that 'interoperability.

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The campus now has a group that's

developing a road map that shows these major systems on campus, and who they have to share data with. At the time we first talked about how important this was, I guess we thought there'd be about six large or tier one systems-such as DaFIS [the campus financial information system] and Banner [student information system]. But there are more than 70 systems that interact.

By tier one, you mean—

Big systems that affect virtually everybody on campus. There aren't more than 70 as big as Banner and DaFIS, but they connect in some way to several other different systems, so you can't develop them in isolation.

With this recognition, units that are starting to develop new software, like Graduate Studies, come to CCFIT to talk about GradSMAART [an online graduate student application, admission and tracking project] because they recognize that it's got to obtain data from some other systems, and give up data to other systems and to campus

Why step down as CCFIT chair at the end of 2007? The simple reason is that I'm retiring in June. The more complex reason is this council is a very valuable unit on campus, and shouldn't depend on one person. So it's much better, having been chair for several years, to step down while I'm still here on campus, and then I can provide institutional memory for the new chair.

You're an interesting person to head CCFIT. You spend a month every summer in a remote cabin in Ontario, Canada. It's accessible only by boat, and you use kerosene lamps for light. You're a nature enthusiast. Yet you have an avid interest in technology. Does this help you bridge the gap between technologists and the rest of the campus?

When I was first chair of this council, I was nervous because I thought I'm not enough of a technologist to really lead a group like this. But sometimes technologists forget and use jargon, while many users just don't know what's going on. So I thought, maybe I'll be good because I won't be afraid to ask questions from the user's perspectives. 'What does that term mean?' I'm so interested in how you use it.

Technology has spread past the point where only its fans need to discuss it.

Right. There are lots of details, and almost all the details matter. For example, you have to know how to protect your computers with anti-virus software, and about firewalls, or you're at risk.

was nervous

a technologist to

really lead a group

You have to update your **C** When I was first computer because otherwise it could chair of this council, get infected. Yes. Maybe I don't do it myself, but I have to know because I thought I need to do it. Like I'm not enough of

with a car, maybe vou don't know how to make major repairs or even change the oil, but you know you've got to get somebody to work on your car.

Flash drives as earrings

You use humor and a light touch to discuss campus tech. Why? It can illustrate how technology can be used in in-

novative ways. Technology is not just used to crunch big numbers, or to store giant files. I look for people to talk to the council about interesting uses of technology

At the end of every meeting, we have a 'show and tell' called 'technology innovation.'

Those are segments where you bring someone in to talk about technology in their work.

Yes. The topics have ranged from a demonstration in virtual reality of schizophrenia-that presentation was from Dr. Peter Yellowlees of UCDMC-to the different ways flash drives can be configured. I did that one. I showed images of flash drives attached to jewelry, earrings, watches, lipsticks, ballpoint pens. Just as a joke, I took a picture of my cat Rumsey wearing a flash drive. Just to amuse people and expand their horizon.

The point there was to show—well, you wouldn't actually use a flash drive in an earring ...

Well, I have a flash drive I wear around my neck. So

New CCFIT chair is skilled in IT research

Francois Gygi, professor of applied science in the College of Engineering, took over as chair of the Campus Council for Information Technology (CCFIT) in January. Among other things, he's known for innovative uses of advanced information technology

Gygi's research focuses on creating computer simulations of natural phenomena in physics and chemistry. In 2006, a research team he led received the Gordon Bell prize for simulating the properties of the chemical element molybdenum using a supercomputer; Gygi wrote the code while working at the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory. His current research includes developing high-performance simulation software for use on the world's fastest supercomputers.

Gygi earned his doctorate in physics in Switzerland in 1988, where he also worked as a researcher for various companies. He joined Lawrence Livermore as a computer scientist in 1998, and came to the Davis campus in 2005. He currently teaches "Applied Science 115: Numerical Methods for Scientists and Engineers" and (jointly with other faculty in applied science) "Applied Science 229: Computational Molecular Modeling.

With IT's growing importance to campus activities, Gygi said, the council is an increasingly essential forum for discussing and evaluating new technologies.

"I look forward to hearing from all council members' constituencies," he said, "and hope to bring to the debate the viewpoint of a computational scientist.

Pete Siegel, campus chief information officer, said he selected Gygi for the position based on Gygi's reputation "not only as an innovative user of technology, and for his own world-class research, but also as a careful listener who advocated strongly for the needs of his fellow faculty."

'Why is this so difficult? I don't have time to do this!' But I stick with it, and pretty soon I figure it out,

and I can do MyTravel without any problems, and I'll get reimbursed, and it's a better system.

So, some patience is good.

Some patience, and a little bit of forgiveness for mistakes and things, and for slowdowns.

Allocate more money to campus tech

What needs to happen next in campus technology here? I might be going out a little far on a limb, but the amount of resources that the campus invests in technology needs to increase, to be a bigger percentage of the pie. I don't know how much bigger.

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Perhaps part of the funds distributed to the colleges, deans and departments could be allocated to information technology enhancements that benefit the whole campus, and that help to reduce workloads for students, staff and faculty. Hopefully the benefits are obvious to all the users. Since there is rarely any new money, re-allocation is essential.

Technology is so central to everything that we do, including security and connectivity, that we're just going to have to pay for it.

Do you have parting advice for CCFIT?

Never forget about the unheard voices on campus, the undergraduates, graduate students, federation faculty, academic faculty. They're not organized in the ways that a lot of administrative units are organized, so it's very hard to hear from them. I'd just say to CCFIT, I think one of your major missions is to keep listening to those voices.

The other thing is, technology is fun and it's here to stay. 🗖

READ MORE:

For more from this talk—including her appreciation of students'



like this. But sometimes technologists forget and use jargon, while many users don't know what's going on. So I thought, maybe I'll be good because I won't be afraid to ask questions from the user's perspectives. 77

units too. Coordination is key.

Would most people on campus involved in technological decisions agree with you about the need for coordination?

Yes, although there are frustrations. If you do things in a coordinated way, it takes time and effort, so you can't do them fast, and you can't tailor them to your own specific needs as easily.

Kerosene-lit breaks from technology

One of your trademarks is your deep interest in technology—specifically, how people use it in their work.

I have a little sign in my office that shows a filing cabinet with a red circle and a slash through it. I want to get rid of filing cabinets and paper copies in my office. It's so easy to find and use information digitally, as opposed to finding data somewhere in a stack of paper.

Digital information is so important in the science and the teaching that I do. I've done a lot of collaborative research, and being able to share documents and make changes, instead of having to mail them back and forth, has been a tremendous advantage.

In teaching, students have easy access to digital information on the campus Web sites. I used to do slide shows. But if a student is sick and can't see them in class, and later wants to come look at the slides, what can you do? Now it's so easy to post images in PowerPoint on the class Web site, and it is available to students 24/7.

maybe you want something a little more decorative. So you could make it into earrings. You leave home in the morning and want to make sure you take your flash drive, so you wear it. It's humorous, but there's a functional part too.

It's complex; be patient

What's the most misunderstood aspect of campus technology at UC Davis?

Wow. (pause) Sometimes people don't realize, when they ask for technology to deliver something, that it's much more complicated than they thought. And they hear 'no' not because they asked for something without value, but because there's not the resources to pull it off, right then.

It gets to be a double-edged sword. Maybe they ask IET to do something for them, and IET wants to be a service, so they say, 'Well yes, we can look into this,' but as they get into it they realize, 'Wow, what the user is really asking for, maybe they didn't understand it, is really quite involved.' Then IET may say, 'You asked for this and we said we'd look into it, and we can do it but not as soon as we originally thought.' That can be frustrating to users.

The other thing is, I wish the users of technology would be more forgiving of the learning curve.

All of us are really busy, and so I think, 'Oh, I don't want to sit down and read any manual.' I wait until the last minute and then they say, 'you've got to switch to this new software,' so I start doing it and it's just really frustrating, and I'm tempted to fire off an email to somebody and say,

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tech skills, and why she's taking up the piano-read the extended version at technews.ucdavis.edu.

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