

Constituent Group: State Systems
December 5, 1996, noon meeting
Attendance list submitted separately

Ruth Carlson Robertson, University of Maryland System Administration, welcomed the participants to the first, exploratory meeting of the State Systems Constituent Group. By means of a round robin introduction answering the question, What has your system done well that others might want to know more about? some common issues or concerns and some unique situations were described.

The telecommunications network itself is considered to be a strategic move by many states. How they use it varies, sometimes linking only some public universities, sometimes making ATM service available between campuses, and sometimes being part of a broader state alliance that includes K-12 and most state agencies. The networks usually carry video and data, although variations separate those two or include voice. The networks are used to link administrative computing, to access a common admissions and transfer system, to provide distance education, or to link libraries.

In many states, institutions are struggling to balance the inefficiencies of their traditional autonomy against the benefits of data transfer, course sharing, and bulk purchasing power. When the additional factor, software licensing and updates, is added to the economic equation, institutional cultures begin to change. Vice presidents for administration and finance are feeling pressure in several states, especially Pennsylvania, to adopt common administrative systems.

Availability of networked services is challenging policy in many states. Transfer of course credits, or joint listing of team taught courses makes necessary curricular reform, and vice versa, since colleges cannot always afford to hire a specialist to teach a course that is being taught at a sister institution. Many regulatory issues arise, from putting reference materials on line to satisfying residency requirements. The question of uniformity of reporting is addressed in a very different way when all institutions share common systems, with a central service developing custom applications. Many systems share purchasing contracts for hardware and software. Some are putting in common purchasing systems as they implement common computing solutions.

The 15 component University of Texas System, which has joined with the Texas A & M System for WAN networks and interactive video, negotiates contracts for the whole system, provides library services for all higher ed in Texas, public and private, and provides a dial-in modem pool for its Austin constituents and for K-12 teachers. Their IT Council is recommending a CIO for the system, at the vice presidential level. The success of the current network makes replacing it with a better one a necessity; figuring out where to get the money from, when the central system has no funds of that magnitude, is a current issue.

Other tidbits gleaned from the general conversation:

- * UC has chosen a common frequency for radio transmission, particularly helpful in disaster situations.
- * Focusing on providing service to the customer has caused UT-Austin to

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provide internet service to 40,000 clients related to the university

* Do NOT outsource those functions that are fundamental to your strategy.

The Federal Communication Commission has just released a tariff proposal that specifically excludes higher education. It would automatically give educational institutions covered by the bill a 10% discount on PBS. It proposes 45 megabit service for \$60K/yr and T1 at \$18K/year. Many institutions are paying more than this. To read the bill, go to the following URL. http://www.fcc.gov/ccb/universal_service/ Note that the date for comment was December 16, but the web site is set up to make it easy to comment as the proposal progresses through the system. Everyone present was urged to take this concern back to their states, study it, alert the right folks, and comment on the way we would like to see the bill written.

Federal Communication Commission
1919 M Street
Washington DC 20554

The group decided that it would like to meet again next year at CAUSE97. Everyone was alerted to the existence of the LISTSERV.