

January 27, 2011

JEFF BARRETT

PPM 200-45 Review Coordinator
Informational and Educational Technology

Re: PPM 200-45 Review: Information Technology Shared Service Center Concept

The Davis Division of the Academic Senate forwarded the subject document to all standing committees and the Faculty Executive Committee in each college and school. Comments were received from the committees on Faculty Welfare, Information Technology, and Planning and Budget.

The document paints a generalized picture of what might be gained by an ITSM solution for UC Davis. It does not establish any detail of limitations of the current set up. The fact that systems used are “generally thought to be outdated” and “therefore we seek a new better system” does not substantiate the need for an Information Technology Shared Service Center. Vague and unsupported statements fail to articulate sound justification for the expense associated with replacement. In fact, the document fails to articulate how adopting this system will generate net cost savings. In every case, the campus needs to be considering “Do we really NEED this?” If one of the primary goals of a shared service center is to save money, the concept paper should provide specifics on how savings will be achieved.

Fundamentally, all Organizational Excellence/Shared Service Center project requests originate with the affected units to ensure optimum performance in conjunction with financial and operational efficiency. To date we have not been provided evidence that centralization provides significant cost savings. Individual departments and centers have special needs, and over the course of time have optimized support to address those needs. Local optimization should be considered and weighed against the benefit of centralization. The creation of a Shared Service Center (SSC) should never have a negative effect on the campus’s educational missions, especially teaching and research.

The following administrative units will be affected by the proposed Organizational Excellence/Shared Service Center project. The effects on these units will in turn have a significant impact on Academic Senate authority over curriculum and admissions.

- **Administrative and Resource Management:** Provides data necessary for the Senate to conduct annual undergraduate program reviews. Additionally, there should be consultation regarding the impact of consolidation on budgetary matters with the Academic Senate Committee on Planning and Budget (CPB) and other Senate committees as needed.
- **Offices of the Chancellor and Provost:** Centralizing would have a large and possibly detrimental effect on the academic personnel process and might also affect the functions and organization of the Academic Senate Office.
- **Information and Educational Technology:** SmartSite contract oversight impacts Academic Senate member interactions with students, communication of curricula and reporting of grades.
- **Student Affairs:** There could be a detrimental influence on courses and curriculum, transcript notation, internships, advising, degrees, and admissions and enrollment (ICMS, BANNER).
- **University Relations:** Problems might be created for faculty who interact with government officials, including the state legislature, and for gift administration, including faculty endowments.

The proposal states that the “goal of the IT SSC is to provide the highest quality customer service at the lowest possible cost.” Faculty members on campus feel that there have been too many programs put into

place with the goal of “saving money” that have, in turn, lowered educational effectiveness and increased dependence on faculty input of data, thereby increasing faculty workload and costs associated with administrative tasks. We do not find it acceptable to sacrifice quality and faculty time and salaries to save money on administrative salaries. Reducing costs should not be the first priority when implementing a new IT system on campus. Before making decisions on centralization vs. decentralization for units on campus, evidence concerning the pros and cons, including a true analysis of savings and effect on the UC mission, should be presented, and the rationale for the decision should be explained.

We wish to emphasize how critical Academic Senate input is in these cases. Senate input is needed before the systems are already developed and decisions are already made. A good example of this can be found in the case of SmartSite. There were clear requirements in the CCFIT sub-committee report on the adoption of an alternative to MyUCDavis. The current SmartSite did not meet those requirements. Indeed, the decision to use a commercial vendor is directly opposed to the requirements. The adoption of SmartSite is clearly a case in which the campus has lowered educational effectiveness and increased faculty workload. For example, SmartSite makes it difficult to weight assignments in particular ways, and it insists on computing grades in terms of percentages when faculty members may want raw scores. Even when one attempts to use “grade override,” students end up seeing the unwanted, and often misleading, computations created by SmartSite. The program also makes it difficult to include Extension students in a class roster. Faculty and student time is wasted in efforts to provide access to such students, even though departments benefit greatly from the students’ fees. This is just one of many examples of centralized IT decisions creating work for faculty and students under the banners of ‘efficiency’ and ‘cost savings’.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. G. Powell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "R".

Robert Powell, Chair
Davis Division of the Academic Senate
Chair & Professor: Chemical Engineering & Materials Science
Professor: Food Science & Technology