

UC IT Guidance Committee
Focus Area on IT in the Student Experience
Report for the ITGC meeting on September 18-19, 2006

University of California
Information Technology Guidance Committee

IT in Student Experience
Systemwide discussion
June 23, 2006
Oakland, CA

Summary Report for ITGC

A version of the report that contains the appendices can be found online at:
[http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/itgc/focusareas/student/report_participants_final.p](http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/itgc/focusareas/student/report_participants_final.pdf)
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I. Executive Summary

On June 23, 2006 over sixty staff, faculty and students representing UC's ten campuses and the Office of the President met in Oakland to participate in a discussion about how information technology is being and could be used to inform, engage and support prospective and current students.

Context – Exploring Information Technology Opportunities Systemwide

The discussion was the first of several being planned with various UC stakeholders by the UC Information Technology Guidance Committee (ITGC)

(<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/itgc/>) . The ITGC has been established by Provost Rory Hume to engage in a consultative, 18-month systemwide planning process to identify and recommend strategic directions to guide investments in information technology (IT) and the academic information environment for the University of California. The ITGC has identified six initial areas of exploration:

- Advanced Networking Services
- Common IT Architecture
- High Performance Research Computing
- Instructional Technology
- IT in Student Experience
- Stewardship of Digital Assets

Take Away Messages

Several key themes emerged during the discussion:

1. Enriching and improving the experience of students throughout their lifecycle (from prospective, through current, to graduated students) is both strategic and mission critical for the University of California.
2. Information technology provides essential tools for UC to communicate and transact essential business with, cultivate affinity among, and enrich the lives of its students throughout their lifecycle.
3. As part of the ITGC planning process UC has the opportunity to identify leverage points for cross-campus or systemwide investment and action that will lead to efficiencies in, and increased capacity for, offering IT-mediated services and support to students.
4. UC needs increased capacity for experimentation and innovation in creating student-facing systems and applications so that it can be more responsive to student IT needs and expectations.

The organizers of the discussion took away the message that these things can and should happen and that the UC Office of the President can play a useful role, particularly by facilitating dialogue across the many functional areas of the University that intersect with students.

Working Definition of Student Experience

For the purposes of the June 23 discussion, student experience was defined as: “How current and prospective students engage with and experience the University (outside of classrooms and labs).”

Participants

The participants in the June 23rd discussion on IT in Student Experience were drawn from diverse functional areas, including Academic Preparation, Admissions and Enrollment, Housing/Residential Services, Academic Computing, Libraries, Registrar’s Office and Student Services.¹

Focus and Outcomes of the June 23rd Discussion

The focus for the five-hour session was emerging issues and IT opportunities related to student experience, rather than a complete inventory of current IT needs. Led by Associate Vice Provost Dan Greenstein, who is a co-coordinator of the ITGC along with Associate Vice President Kristine Hafner, and ITGC Consultants Katherine Mitchell and Paula Murphy, participants engaged – in small groups and as a whole – in a series of activities to brainstorm and synthesize ideas to:

- create a better understanding of the prospective and current student experience, and the trends that shape it, at UC;
- explore the implications for IT;
- develop a list of potential opportunities for systemwide and/or cross-campus IT collaboration or coordination; and
- engage in meaningful discussion across “silos” and functional areas.

Hearing from Students

During a lunchtime panel session the students in attendance gave examples of how they use technology in a typical day. Examples include:

- Being required to use “clickers” (remote-control voting systems) to take pop quizzes in class;
- Engaging in online chats with other students to try to understand certain points being made by instructor during class;
- Participating in conferences and panel discussions via video conferencing;
- Getting the day’s news by reading Blogs and checking RSS² feeds.

They also made several suggestions for how UC could use IT to enhance their experience, including:

- Students are an untapped resource. Involve students on the front end, instead of the backend, when developing student-facing systems.
- Make the content of the University open.
- Leverage the work students are doing, in classrooms, for example, for benefit of all.

¹ A complete list of invited participants can be found at:
http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/itgc/focusareas/student/062306_attendees.pdf.

² RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication. It enables content to be delivered to web browsers by subscription. A definition can be found on Wikipedia at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RSS_\(file_format\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RSS_(file_format))

- Keep Wikipedia entries about the UC campuses up to date.
- Use blogs and RSS to communicate information to students.
- Publish an integrated systemwide online course catalog and online directory so that students can find courses and information across the system.
- Develop a systemwide Wiki environment so students can create, share and stay in sync while working on project collaborations.
- If you want technology to be a factor in students' selection process of campuses, put information about it on the Admissions section of the campus web sites.

Describing IT in the Student Experience Now and in 5 Years

We asked participants how they would describe “IT in the Student Experience” as it exists now and how they would like to describe it in five years from now. The most commonly expressed ideas were:

Words to describe NOW	Words you would like to describe 5 YEARS FROM NOW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusing/frustrating/challenging <i>(most commonly expressed concept by far)</i> • Silo-ed • Engaging/dynamic/exciting • Diverse/multi-dimensional • Social 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated/seamless/easy <i>(most commonly expressed concept by far)</i> • Virtual/high-tech • Fulfilling/satisfying • Competitive • Social/Collaborative

We also asked for ideas for how UC might get from now (confusing) to the future (seamless). Suggestions were:

- Create UC-wide list of majors with prospective applicants
- One portal for all university information
- Usability testing in context of breadth of student services, student-centered design
- Consistency; all course web sites have baseline and accurate information
- Assess value to student; what's the middleground? Pick low-hanging fruit to address
- Provide “sandboxes”; encourage creative solutions
- Put all course reserves online
- Use only one course management system
- Make information easier to find on web sites
- Centralized agreements on definitions, data, standards, formats (on selected topics)

- More money

Big Ideas

We asked participants to write down big ideas for how UC could enhance the student experience. Some of the themes that emerged are:

- Build portals to provide integrated and easily accessible information
- Centralize help desk operations
- Use social networking software, such as Facebook, to engage students and build community
- Make more use of podcasting for distributing course content as well as public events
- Develop applications and systems so that they are standards-based and can be integrated with other systems and across campuses
- Standardize e-transcripts
- Encourage collaboration by providing useful collaboration tools and funding
- Involve students in the development process of student systems
- Provide more professional development opportunities for IT professionals and facilitate sharing of expertise and best practices across the system

Although the primary focus of the June 23rd discussion was intended to be on how students engage with and experience the University *outside of the classroom and lab* (because the ITGC has a separate work group focused on instructional technology), a good portion of the discussion was in fact on academic uses of IT. We discovered that for students IT use is ubiquitous and it is almost impossible to have a conversation about the student experience and not talk about course web sites, how instructors use technology in the classroom, etc. This experience reaffirms the ITGC’s plan to closely link the Student Experience and Instructional Technology activities.

Several themes and ideas emerged throughout the course of the day. Outlined in the next section is a list of those themes that the ITGC plans to explore in more depth this fall and winter through a variety of consultations with UC stakeholders. A list of those activities can be found in Section III of this report.

II. Preliminary list of focus areas/themes for further exploration by ITGC

Participants generated many ideas about IT opportunities for UC systemwide activity (a complete list of ideas is attached). Below is a preliminary list of focus areas (which includes many of those ideas) that will be explored in the coming months.

Focus Area/Theme	Description	May have implications for these ITGC Work Groups
Open vs. closed content and courseware	A growing number of institutions of higher ed have committed to openly sharing their	Instructional Technology

Focus Area/Theme	Description	May have implications for these ITGC Work Groups
<i>(also an overall “Big Idea” identified for exploration by the ITGC)</i>	intellectual resources on the web. The ITGC will explore how the UC system might benefit from participating in this movement, how the campuses might work together to do so, and the policies (e.g., IP) and practices (e.g., faculty reward) that may need revising to encourage and enable the production and distribution of open content.	
Identity management	Students (prospective, current and graduated) often are required to log in to several systems in the course of a day (e.g., email, learning management system, financial aid system, etc.) And if they need to enroll in a course on another campus, they must manage multiple ids. A shared identity management strategy across the system has the potential to reduce duplicate/redundant systems and to improve service to students.	Common IT Architecture
Information interoperability of, and access to, student-facing systems	Students complain about a lack of consistency among student-facing systems as well as the sheer number that they must access. Staff time is not used efficiently when information must be duplicated or re-created and when developing systems without building on the expertise already attained by others. More efficient and smarter services could be provided if systems were built to standards, access was made easier (via portals, for example) and if practices were put into place that encouraged sharing of information across functional areas.	Common IT Architecture
Eportfolio/persistent data storage for students	UC could provide a valuable service to students throughout their lifecycle by providing them with an online repository to store and access their academic output. Such a system would allow them to set permissions for access so that they can share with potential employers, other institutions of higher education, etc. Because eportfolios have not been widely rolled out on any of the UC campuses, the timing may be right to engage the system to develop and implement in a coordinated	Instructional Technology

Focus Area/Theme	Description	May have implications for these ITGC Work Groups
	fashion.	

Focus Area/Theme	Description	May have implications for these ITGC Work Groups
Baseline IT provision for every student	The student experience could be greatly enhanced if every UC student could expect a baseline level of IT service, and was required to meet an established standard of information literacy. Such a standard could result in more effective design and delivery of services because they are built upon basic assumptions about students' access and competency with information technology. It could also lead to efficiencies if there were systemwide licensing for equipment, support, training, etc.	
Online social networks and how they can be leveraged for community development	Today's students are accustomed to interacting with peers via online social networks and developing friendships and communities of interest online. Incorporating best practices and tools from these online social networks into UC systems and practices that enable community building for UC students could add a supportive resource for students, for both academic and extracurricular endeavors. The campuses could explore together the potential of harnessing the power of online social networks for benefit of the student experience and any policies or practices that might need to be addressed.	
Online courses	Students increasingly expect to have more choice and convenience when it comes to taking courses. A growing number of students must work to pay for their education, requiring more flexibility in scheduling in order to get to degree in a timely manner. The UC system could work together to develop the technological infrastructure, as well as policies and practices, to enable this convenience, choice, and affordability, leveraging the unique strengths of the campuses in deciding which courses or roles they contribute.	Instructional Technology
Balancing stability & innovation in provision of student-facing services	Explore how UC can become a more innovative place in which to develop web-based services for students and how it can leverage the expertise that exists on the	

Focus Area/Theme	Description	May have implications for these ITGC Work Groups
	campuses for benefit of all. Explore how students factor into this equation and how to give them more of a voice, and stake, in the development and provision of their services.	

III. Proposed ITGC Activities related to IT in Student Experience

Proposed activities to explore how to build community, foster discussion, identify potential systemwide activities and move toward practical implementation:

- Meet with UC enrollment management and technology professionals to further explore strategic directions (systemwide meeting on Oct. 17-18, 2006);
- Convene a small group to review the input gathered and discuss how best to advance the issues raised;
- Establish a listserv to continue the dialogue (details can be found in the next section of the report).

Additional possible activities include:

- Consult with external relations, alumni relations, university relations folks from across the system about alumni experience; review preliminary focus areas based on June 23 discussion;
- Gather data about IT in Student Experience from across system, state, and nation;
- Convene regional symposia to explore focus areas that emerged from the June 23 discussion; include students from the UC campuses as well as people who serve prospective, current, and graduated students.

IV. Ideas for community building/continuing the dialogue

The overwhelming response to the invitation to the systemwide discussion, including more participants than had RSVP'd, as well as the feedback from the participants after the meeting suggests that there is an urgency and strategic importance in continuing the dialogue that was initiated on June 23. We discovered that part of the eagerness to participate in a UCOP organized discussion is that at most campuses, student experience functions are distributed across several divisions, often making coordination and clear decision making challenging at a campus level.

In addition to continuing its consultation activities in this area, UCOP will explore how communication and collaboration can be facilitated on an ongoing basis between students, staff and faculty across departments, campuses and functional areas.

As an initial step, a listserv for IT in the Student Experience (**ITGC-SE-L@listserv.ucop.edu**) has been established. The subscription list was pre-populated with all of the people who were invited to participate in the June 23 discussion.

If you wish to unsubscribe, send a message to listserv@ucop.edu with the following command in the body:

Unsubscribe ITGC-SE-L

To recommend that additional people be added, please send their names to paula.murphy@ucop.edu.

The ITGC will occasionally send updates to the listserv on its activities, specifically those relating to IT in the Student Experience. As subscribers, feel free to use the list to send out messages and inquiries as appropriate. If demand warrants, additional listservs can be established for specific issues so that this list remains relevant to a diverse audience.

If you have additional ideas about how systemwide communication about IT in the student experience could be facilitated, please send them to the listserv or directly to paula.murphy@ucop.edu.

Post-meeting supplement

A. Key questions presented to ITGC for discussion

During the discussion with the IT Guidance Committee at its meeting on September 19, 2006, the leads of the IT in the Student Experience focus area, Dan Greenstein, Katherine Mitchell and Paula Murphy, posed the following questions:

1. How should we address the growing gap in terms of expectations and technology usage between students and faculty?
2. How should we think about student experience comprehensively across the life cycle of engagement (from prospective through alumni)?
3. How do we obtain input from students?
4. Where and how do we build a home amongst the many functional owners whose work helps to shape the student experience?

B. Outcomes from ITGC discussion

Main issues raised in the discussion

Enhancing the student experience is a high priority. ITGC members expressed passion about the responsibility UC has to understanding and enhancing the student experience and considers it a priority issue for the UC system to address.

Engage students in the design and provision of services. Ideas expressed by the ITGC included: Including students in a range of projects along the student experience continuum will help us understand how best to serve them; Consider allowing students to control how IT money is spent as a means to engage them; Establish an ongoing advisory group of students (it was noted that some feedback mechanisms are already in place).

Bridge the Gap. Ideas expressed by the ITGC included: A big gap exists between how students use IT and how the institution uses IT; How can the institution better serve today's students with the technology that they already use? How can we

learn from student uses of IT to collaborate and learn from each other? This is an area where we can leap forward, leveraging the fact that students are already way ahead, but we need to be careful not to leave some students behind because of digital divide; think about a minimum expectation of student IT capability to address the digital divide.

Several of the issues being addressed by other ITGC work groups, especially Instructional Technology, impact directly on the student experience. Cross-over issues include:

- Revise university policies to encourage the adoption of new models of teaching & learning. New information technologies extend learning beyond physical space and time boundaries. Policies and practices need to reflect that, including how to credit faculty for time spent interacting with students outside of the classroom.
- Explore the common UC experience. Many students see themselves as members of the UC community, not only of one campus. Students expect a more common experience across University services than we currently provide. Focusing on the student experience provides an opportunity to explore commonality across the system.
- Identify strategic goals for open content. Open content is key driver for change (e.g., impact of MIT's initiative on teaching and learning on their own campus as well as globally).

ITGC Recommendations for Future Action

The ITGC recommended that the following be done:

- Partner with functional owners, e.g. Vice Chancellors for Student Affairs and Deans of Students, to foster the development of a process for continuously addressing issues and planning for the student experience.
- Explore possibilities for developing a research agenda to test assumptions and evaluate existing student experiences and perceptions thereof, including some effort to synthesize work already being done at UC on this topic.
- Identify issues being addressed by other ITGC work groups that potentially impact upon the student experience and enlist the help of those groups in developing them.

C. Next Steps

- This fall and winter, engage with functional owners and key stakeholders to build awareness about the significance of taking a systemwide view of the “student experience”. Such stakeholders and functional owners may include: Vice Chancellors for Student Affairs, AVCs/Deans of Students, Undergraduate Deans, Graduate Deans, Academic Senate Committees, Housing Directors, and the various stakeholders in attendance at the systemwide enrollment management meeting (Oct. 17 & 18).
- Synthesize from existing information sources and reports data that will help us understand the student experience.

- Discuss with the other ITGC Work Groups how the student experience relates to their work. Discuss ideas for how this information can be presented in a cohesive fashion to the ITGC.