January 30, 2003

TO: University Planning Council Information Technology Committee

FROM: Michael Dieckmann  
Associate Vice President for Information Technology and CIO

RE: January 2003 Status Report

Following is a brief status update report, covering the time period since my last report of January 13.

SCT Banner ERP System Project

We have put in place the project organization, with a steering committee, coordinating committee, functional work teams and leaders, and project staff from SCT. We have not yet finalized the contracts with SCT; hopefully that will be completed in early February. We have ordered equipment and other ancillary software such as Oracle database licenses, in preparation for initiating the implementation project. We are also finalizing our support contact with the Central Florida Regional Data Center. Project space issues also remain unresolved.

LMS Selection Project

The Center for University Teaching and Learning is scheduling on-site vendor demonstrations for the week of February 17.

Using one-time funding provided by President Cavanaugh, I have extended our Prometheus contract for another six months, through June 2003. It is clear that we will not be migrated off Prometheus by the end of that license period. Likewise, it is unlikely that Blackboard will give us another six-month license extension, particularly if their product is not chosen as the replacement solution. A one year renewal of the Prometheus license will cost approximately $80,000. This is not currently budgeted.

Anti-Virus Site Licensing for Students

As approved by the Committee, ITS has implemented the extension of the anti-virus software site license to currently-enrolled students. The software and documentation are now available to students via the SoftServ system of NAUTICAL. I produced an ITS News article on the new service, and we have updated the services directory in the ITS Online web site to advertise the new service. We also posted an announcement to the StudentNews email newsletter, and Doug Pearson and I informed the SGA Executive Council of the new service at a recent meeting where we discussed the technology fee with them.
The IDLS classrooms have gotten off to a rocky start at the beginning of Spring Term. The two new rooms which just came on-line in January, used heavily by the Electrical and Computer Engineering program, have experienced frequent problems with bad transmission quality and transmission breakdowns. The two older rooms, which were also upgraded in early January, have also experienced problems, although fewer.

Last week the vendor who supplied the equipment for the rooms was asked to remove the “Visual Presenter” component of the system, which appears to have been the source of the majority of the problems. Transmissions appear improved, but a variety of other technical problems remain. The Provost and the Senior Vice President have charged Gary Howard and Mike Dieckmann with producing a proposal for an altered support model for these facilities.

UWF, like much of the Internet, was hit the weekend of January 24-26 by the “SQL Slammer” Internet worm, a software agent that attacks Microsoft SQLServer database servers and uses them to flood networks with noise. The UWF network was down through Friday night and for most of Saturday, and isolated buildings were down through early Monday morning.

The attack at UWF shows that we have much work to do yet with establishing proper server security procedures; the software patches that protect servers against the vulnerability that was exploited by this worm were first released in July 2002. One ITS test server was attacked, as well as the Foundation Fundware server; these systems were quickly repaired. The major effort in the resolution was detecting affected non-ITS servers, finding their server administrators, and getting the patches applied. Until servers were patched or disconnected, ITS was forced to shut down the network in entire buildings where affected servers are housed. Departmental servers that were infiltrated by the worm include the following:

- UPIC server in University Planning.
- SBDC server.
- “CASdebugger” server in CAS.
- “Moray” server in Computer Science.

Other campus servers were doubtless also unprotected, but were saved from the worm after ITS programmed our Internet firewall to keep further worm attacks off the campus network.

The Florida Information Resource Network (FIRN), which provides our Internet connectivity, has been outsourced by the State to Hayes E-Government Resources, Inc. Hayes assumes the oversight and management of FIRN effective February 1st. We do not yet know the full implications of this change for UWF. It is likely that FIRN services, previously provided to us at no cost, will soon become a charged service.

1 Although ITS supports the Foundation’s Fundware server, the software running on that server is supplied by an external vendor. ITS was unaware, prior to this incident, that the software had SQLServer embedded within it, and thus the server had not been patched.
The ArgoNet II project proceeds toward deployment of the new storage, printing, and lab management infrastructure at the end of Spring Term. A general information program for the University community will get underway in February, with various briefing and information updates being issued by the project team throughout the remainder of the project.

In response to the CIO’s request for proposals from the colleges, wireless networking project proposals have been received from the College of Arts and Sciences and from the College of Professional Studies. Discussions to study and evaluate these proposal will begin in February, and a report will be issued to the UPC-IT Committee in March.

Dr. Ken Ford and I are producing an analysis for Dr. Cavanaugh of the University’s options for joining Internet2 and connecting to that network at OC3 bandwidth speeds (155 Mbps – for comparison our current Internet connection is 45 Mbps). I will share that analysis with the Committee when it is finished. I am also establishing an ad hoc Internet2 steering committee with representation from the colleges and research centers and the UPC-IT Committee, in the event that we go forward with Internet2 membership. The main barrier will be funding; initial estimates show costs in the range of $350K - $500K per year.

Encryption now available on web server: As noted in ITS News, secure SSL encryption for departmental web pages on the uwf.edu server is now available. This is important for web pages that transmit sensitive information such as passwords, IDs, account numbers, etc.