Minutes of the Academic Information Technology Committee
2 December 2003

Present: Greg Anderson (Chair), Joe Benz, Deb Schroeder, Janet Wilke (Interim Library Director), Dustin Kozal (Student Senate), Vijay Agrawal, Nanette Hogg, Robert Walden

Absent: Sri Seshadri

Guest: Aaron Asay (Information Technology Services)

Anderson called the meeting to order at approximately 2:00 PM

Minutes of the meeting of October 7th were approved with minor grammatical and spelling corrections.

Agenda Items

Tablet Computing

Schroeder and Asay talked about the advantages and disadvantages of tablet PC’s. Advantages include weight, size, portability, and similarity to traditional pen and paper. In the classroom tablets do not create a “screen wall” and are quiet. Furthermore, tablet PCs can be linked directly to each other via a local access network, so the instructor and students can exchange data in real time. Disadvantages include price ($1500 to $2000), interfaces that are still difficult and quirky, battery life (3.5 hours or so), absence of removable media (disc drives, etc.). In addition, tablet PCs can and do crash. Schroeder noted that at present tablet PCs are still a niche market.

Asay then demonstrated a Toshiba tablet PC owned by ITS. He demonstrated how he used it to take class notes directly on his instructor’s power point slides, which he had imported from Blackboard, and how he could copy and paste material from a downloaded electronic article into a paper he was writing. He used the handwriting recognition software to convert his handwritten notes into ASCII text; he noted that such software is still buggy (confusing “u” and “v” for example).

Schroeder and Asay suggested an instructor could employ a table PC much like a Smartboard. For example, a PowerPoint could be projected from the tablet, and the instructor
could then write, draw, etc. on the PowerPoint. The modified PowerPoint could then be saved.

Schroeder said that she is getting questions from prospective students and their parents about this kind of technology, and that tablet PCs could serve as a catalyst to implement the latest technology at UNK.

The Committee thanked Asay and Schroeder for the demonstration and discussion. Benze indicated that he would like the opportunity to try a tablet PC in his classes.

Committee Secretary

The Committee still does not have a Secretary. The Chair asked if there was a volunteer; there was not. The Chair proposed that “note taking” could be rotated among the elected faculty members; members felt this would be unacceptable to the Senate. The Chair volunteered to provide minutes for this meeting. Chair’s note: there was considerable interest in being Secretary IF the Secretary were provided with a tablet PC.

The Chair adjourned the meeting about 3:00 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Greg Anderson
Secretary pro tem