

CCFIT Meeting – February 12, 2007
Responses from Graduate Students

1) SmartSite

- About half of the graduate students I surveyed have not used SmartSite.
- When will SmartSite replace my.ucdavis?
- I received mainly positive feedback from those who have used SmartSite (only a couple people found it not useful or user-friendly).
- Feedback/Suggestions for SmartSite:
 - o Instant messaging capability (you can currently see users who are logged on and can post messages, but no real time communication available)
 - o Create SmartSite workshops for people with different levels of computer skills (user was frustrated that participants needed explanations on how to enter a password, etc.)
 - o Request for instructor’s ability to disable access (temporarily) to the Wiki & Message Center so that during testing situations, students may still have access to SmartSite generally, but no access to resources.
 - o “...improvements on the chat functions, discussion boards, and any other online function to spur collaboration would surely benefit our instruction.”
- Sample Praise:
 - o “I took a class on using Smartsite and used it last quarter to coordinate a study group. It was great, since we were able to share responses to questions and post ideas to share with the whole group.”

2) Outsourcing E-mail

- In my survey, I mentioned that companies like Microsoft, Yahoo, and Google are offering to take care of our mail. Many students requested Google by name.
- 2/3 of the students I surveyed are in favor of outsourcing while 1/3 were not in favor. One would like to learn more about the Pros/Cons before deciding.

Students LIKE/WANT...	Students are CONCERNED about...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - more storage space, search capability, draft saving function, spell check, etc. (all of which Geckomail lacks) - lifetime e-mail address - flagging/folder functions - conversations threads (by Google) - ability for e-mail to be sorted into folders as it is received - command line? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - academic freedom/security - corporate involvement - privatization of university activities - “This is acceptable only if sufficient guarantees of intellectual property rights and individual privacy are offered.”

- Questions/Suggestions:
 - o How would that work for students who already have an account with one of the companies?
 - o Why doesn't the University do more to teach students about using their own email client such as Mac Mail, Eudora, Outlook, or Thunderbird?
- Sample responses:
 - o “Geckomail doesn't have search. That's pretty much like a car without a transmission.”
 - o “Geckomail is so horrible. I wouldn't even be opposed to a little advertising in my e-mail, as long as the campus made some money.”

3) Spam Filters

- More than 2/3 of graduate students surveyed are (reasonably) happy with the new spam filtering measures. It was unclear if those who were complaining of terrible spam knew that they could adjust their filtering settings (they were directed to do so and I have not heard updates yet).
- Many students were not aware of the Allow/Deny lists & complained about losing e-mails that were not spam.
- One student noted a significant decline in spam after the new measures were introduced, but "it's now as bad as ever. Although I recognize that it'd probably be far worse if it weren't for the measures you implemented, so thank you."
- To put things in perspective, however... "[The spam level is] Really bad. Abyssmally so, I would say. I get a message or two of spam in my UCD account every day."
- Praise:
 - o "I've been pleasantly surprised!"
 - o "A few things still get through now and then, but most importantly, I'm not finding that "real" mail gets sent to the spam folder. I think they're spot on with whatever they're using right now."

4) Music Downloads: Ctrax

- 2/3 of graduate students surveyed were not aware of the service or haven't used it. While some were enthusiastic to try it out, others were not interested because...
 - o It's not iTunes/not iPod compatible.
 - o You cannot burn or upload music to an mp3 player (for free).
- The one student who has used the service wrote: "Ctrax is a poor excuse for a music download service. Their music selection is not very big and their program ran so slowly on my computer I finally uninstalled it. Even for 'free' music it wasn't worth the hassle."
- "I'm an old lady and don't even own an iPod & when I listen to music it's still the old-fashioned way, on a CD player. I'm also a big fan of silence."

5) Miscellaneous Questions/Requests

- Are we planning on continuing to upgrade the wireless network? (For example, wireless is not always available in Shields Library.)
- Is there any chance of UCD getting plagiarism software, such as Turn It In?
- Students still seem to have trouble getting computer time to print papers and work on projects, so I wasn't sure if they were planning on expanding the computer labs or building more. Are there computer printing stations?

6) General Praise:

- "No questions - just keep up the good work!"
- "I love the MySpace file storing feature. I use it all the time as a backup for my slowly failing laptop. Kudos to whoever thought this up!"
- "I love being able to have a course website & post announcements to my class & do all my grading online & all of that. Very nifty."
- "IT HELP is a godsend for so many students. Thank them for all of their hard (and amazingly patient) work."

Views of Grad Students about sundry IT topics: (Bottom line = no one likes geckomail)

Specific comments from graduate students at Bagel-Donut day (November 17, 2006)

- UC-Davis is SLOW (from many people)
- There is not enough storage space in mail
- Gradebook works, but there is not much flexibility or room for creativity
- People were REALLY happy about the new spam filtering
- There should be a limit on how long people can use terminals in common labs

Specific comments from graduate students at Bagel-Donut day (February 9, 2007)

- Again, UC-Davis is SLOW (from many people)
- Again, there is not enough storage space in mail (from many people, a couple mentioned troubles viewing and sharing large graphic files; another said that he can't email his thesis to people because his server rejects attachments over 10MB)
- Gradebook works, but there is not much flexibility or room for creativity
- It would be good if there were more GIS resources available—tutorials, cheap software, or centrally available programs
- It would be good if on-campus housing had wireless. The student thought it would be difficult/expensive to wire it, but currently, there is only dial-up in Russell Park, and that is really slow. Thus, he thought wireless would be a better solution.
- Many people said they used remote access, and having a higher-speed connection would help them
- One person asked about centrally located scanners, and if scanner sheets could be included in the printing budget, or counted towards those sheets.
- Specific complaints about geckomail: No search feature, no ability to save drafts, slow, cumbersome, but people still wanted a .edu email address. Of the people I asked, many (more than half) forwarded their mail to another email account—actually, only two people didn't.

By in large, people were happy with computing and IT, they didn't have many complaints. Many people said they relied on departmental resources, and they felt lucky to be in a resource-rich department. Typical comment was "I don't really interact much with campus IT, because my department has the resources I need." Several mentioned they have independent wireless hotspots in their labs.

One other comment I got regularly, possibly related to the above, was that people didn't know the kinds of resources available centrally/outside of their departments.

I also put out a box for comments, and got two. One, which was fairly representative, said

- 1) Geckomail sucks. It is too slow to be at all functional. Call Google and license gmail technology.
- 2) My.UCDavis: also unusable. This is an enterprise-scale user community and MyUCDavis is not scalable at this level.
- 3) Buy more IP addresses. This is a university—there shouldn't be IP conflicts all the time!"

The other wanted more parking...