

Memo

To: Senate Steering Committee (AY 2024-2025)

Amy Banes-Berceli, PhD
Associate Provost for Operations

From: Alexey Tonyushkin (CAS) and Amartya Sen (SECS),
Co-chairs, Academic Computing Committee, AY 2024-2025

CC: Kathy Dailey

RE: End of the year report. Academic Computing Committee (2024-2025).

Dear Assoc. Provost Banes-Berceli and Senate Steering Committee,

This report summarizes the activities and outcomes of the Academic Computing Committee (ACC) during the 2024-2025 academic year. It outlines our key initiatives, findings, and recommendations for the Senate Steering Committee, aiming to enhance the academic technology landscape at Oakland University. Furthermore, it provides a brief overview of the committee's upcoming tasks and the search for its next chair.

Activities and Outcomes of the 2024-2025 Academic Year

The primary focus of the Academic Computing Committee this academic year has been to gain a comprehensive understanding of the technology needs and experiences of our faculty. Recognizing the evolving role of technology in pedagogy, research, and administrative tasks, the committee dedicated significant effort to gathering pertinent information.

During the previous academic year, discussions within the committee highlighted the lack of a systematic mechanism for understanding the diverse software and technology requirements of faculty across different departments and schools. To address this gap, the ACC undertook the development and deployment of a comprehensive technology needs survey. This survey, carefully designed to include both open-ended and specific questions, aimed to provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to technology use among faculty members.

The survey was finalized in September 2024 and subsequently distributed electronically via email to all faculty members in October 2024. Over three weeks, the committee received 161 responses out of 1100 distributed surveys via email, representing a valuable initial dataset for analysis.

Summary of Technology Needs Survey Findings:

The analysis of the survey responses revealed several key themes and areas requiring attention:

- **Technology Training and Support:** A significant number of respondents expressed uncertainty regarding the effective utilization of available technology. This underscores a general need for enhanced and more accessible technology training opportunities for faculty. While e-LIS has historically offered training sessions, attendance has often been low, indicating a need for innovative strategies to improve faculty engagement with professional development in this area.
- **ClearPass Authentication:** Several respondents reported issues related to the ClearPass login and registration process. Notably, a considerable portion of the respondents indicated a lack of familiarity with ClearPass, suggesting a need for clearer communication and potentially more user-friendly onboarding processes for this system. As CIO, Bhavani Koneru, pointed out, an improved version of ClearPass is planned to be implemented in the near future.
- **Hardware and Peripheral Needs:** Common requests included increased availability of USB-C compatible devices and adapters, additional monitors for enhanced productivity, and a greater number of accessible printing resources across campus.
- **Centralized Purchasing:** Feedback indicated that this model is not desirable, particularly concerning computational needs specific to individual departments. Respondents suggested that a "one-size-fits-all" approach will not adequately address the diverse technological requirements across academic units.
- **Department specific IT support:** There is a need for specific research and teaching support from UTS for natural sciences departments. The support includes network connectivity of specialized devices, hardware configuration, specific software, buying choices of hardware and software, scientific backup. General help doesn't always cover such needs.
- **Site-Wide Software Licensing:** A notable request was the exploration of a site-wide license for Adobe Creative Cloud, which is widely used across various disciplines for teaching, research, and creative endeavors.
 - **Satisfaction with Core Infrastructure:** The survey indicated general satisfaction with existing classroom technology, the effectiveness of IT support in resolving technical issues, and the overall reliability of the university's technology and network connectivity.
- **Varner Hall WIFI Issues:** Several respondents specifically highlighted intermittent challenges with WIFI connectivity within Varner Hall, suggesting a need for infrastructure assessment and potential upgrades in this location.
- **General Purpose Classroom Technology:** Responses regarding the adequacy of current general-purpose classroom technology and support were evenly divided (50% yes, 50% no). Recurring issues included broken DVD players impacting film instruction, the need for USB-C digital adapters, and limited technology support availability during weekend classes. Feedback also corroborated concerns raised by UTS regarding the initial budget allocation for classroom technology maintenance and upgrades from Academic Affairs. CSITS and UTS are reportedly aware of these budgetary constraints and are prioritizing the repair of aging projectors based on available funding. The specific technology challenges in Varner Hall classrooms were reiterated by multiple respondents.

Other Relevant Updates:

Throughout the academic year, the committee received updates from e-LIS and UTS/CSITS, including:

- Progress on GrizzFlex classroom installations in South Foundation Hall, with a final order placed and potential expansion contingent on budget availability.
- Implementation of a timeout feature on general-purpose classroom computers.
- Successful setup of technology infrastructure for the OWC telehealth program.
- The ongoing development of a new simulation lab for the School of Nursing.
- The pending formation of a Classroom Technology Advisory Committee, with a call for ACC member volunteers.
- An initiative led by Matt Switlik (e-LIS) to explore a bulk purchase of Meta Quest 3 VR/AR headsets.
- Updates on the Academic Technology Task Force and the implications of the Title II ADA regulations concerning digital accessibility, with e-LIS actively developing resources and support for faculty and staff.
- The ongoing Laser Projector Initiative is to replace aging lamp-based projectors in general-purpose classrooms.
- Planning for the Moodle 4.5 summer upgrade, which will introduce minor functionality improvements.
- The decision to retain YuJa's video and proctoring platforms following a re-evaluation of alternative services.
- Initial discussions regarding the potential integration of AI into Moodle as part of a pilot project.

Recommendations to the Senate Steering Committee:

Based on the findings of our survey and the updates received throughout the year, the Academic Computing Committee offers the following recommendations for consideration by the Senate Steering Committee:

1. **Provide additional meetings to address faculty needs:** We recommend regular meetings, individually or in groups with UTS representatives, to collect faculty feedback beyond annual or bi-annual tech surveys to address current concerns and needs, and to increase transparency of UTS policies. Increase the presence of UTS at ACC meetings. We request CIO attend the regular ACC meetings.
2. **Invest in Enhanced Faculty Technology Training:** We recommend improving the existing faculty technology training programs to make them more visible to faculty and improve their engagement by exploring diverse delivery methods beyond existing traditional workshops to maximize participation and address the specific needs identified in the survey.
3. **Review and Streamline ClearPass Processes:** We urge a review of the ClearPass login and registration procedures to identify and address the reported usability issues and/or possible replacement of the system with a more user-friendly one. Clearer communication and user-friendly guides should be developed and disseminated to all

faculty members.

4. **Address Hardware and Peripheral Deficiencies:** We recommend a strategic investment in addressing the identified hardware and peripheral needs, including the provision of USB-C compatible equipment, providing additional monitors (increase count to 2 monitors) in GrizzFlex classrooms, and an assessment of printing resource availability across campus.
5. **Centralized Technology Purchasing:** We suggest not implementing this model and instead using more flexible approaches that can better accommodate the diverse computational needs of individual departments and schools.
6. **Department-specific IT support:** We recommend having a dedicated representative from UTS who is familiar with the specific research needs of a particular department/school to be accessible to faculty and researchers. Faculty can meet with such representatives to educate on the specific research requirements to better facilitate the individual solution.
7. **Explore Site-Wide Software Licenses:** We recommend a site-wide license for Adobe Creative Cloud, considering the number of users and potential benefits for teaching, research, and creative activities. In addition, DocuSign or similar OU-wide software would be useful to implement.
8. **Address Infrastructure Issues in Varner Hall:** We recommend a targeted assessment of the WIFI infrastructure in Varner Hall to identify the causes of intermittent connectivity issues and implement necessary upgrades to ensure reliable network access for faculty and students in this building.
9. **Prioritize General Purpose Classroom Technology Upgrades and Support:** We recommend increased budgetary allocation for the maintenance and upgrade of general-purpose classroom technology, specifically addressing issues such as broken DVD players and the need for USB-C adapters. Furthermore, we suggest exploring options for enhanced technology support availability during weekend classes.
10. **Support the Laser Projector Initiative:** We strongly support the ongoing Laser Projector Initiative and encourage continued investment in replacing aging projectors with more reliable and energy-efficient laser technology across all classrooms, including departmental spaces, which were not previously serviced on an ongoing basis.
11. **Facilitate Digital Accessibility Compliance:** We endorse the efforts of e-LIS and Academic Affairs in addressing the Title II ADA regulations. We recommend continued support for faculty and staff through training, resources, and individualized assistance to ensure university-wide digital accessibility compliance by the April 2026 deadline.
12. **Support the Moodle AI Integration Pilot:** We encourage the university to support the proposed Moodle AI integration pilot project, recognizing the potential for AI to enhance teaching and learning. We recommend careful evaluation of the pilot's outcomes to inform future decisions regarding AI integration into the university's learning management system.

Next Tasks and Potential Next Chair:

As the 2024-2025 academic year concludes, the Academic Computing Committee will focus on synthesizing the detailed findings of the technology needs survey to provide more granular recommendations. We will also continue to monitor the progress of ongoing initiatives such as

the GrizzFlex installations, the Laser Projector Initiative, and the digital accessibility compliance efforts.

Furthermore, with the current committee membership tenures drawing to a close, we have initiated the process of identifying the next chair or co-chairs for the 2025-2026 academic year. An email has been sent to continuing committee members, and the potential candidates based on the current membership include Sarah Martin (SHS), Betty Tonui (CAS), Yongsoon Yoon (SECS), and Setareh Ghoreishi (CAS). We anticipate receiving responses and establishing the leadership for the upcoming academic year in the near future, ensuring a smooth transition and continued progress on the committee's important work.

Respectfully,

Alexey and Amartya,

Co-Chairs of the ACC,

AY 2024-2025