

**SUMMARY FOR RESEARCH PORTFOLIO MEETING**

**DATE: April 14, 2014**

**TIME: 10-11 a.m.**

**LOCATION: Eccles Broadcast Center, Dumke Conference Room**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Abby Adamczyk                      Frank Brown                      Tom Cheatham                      Steven Corbató  
Carleton DeTar                      Kobus Van der Merwe

**COMMITTEE SUPPORT:** Julia Harrison, Rene Eborn

**UNABLE TO ATTEND:**

Martin Berzins                      Julio Facelli                      Catherine Soehner

**AGENDA ITEMS DISCUSSED:**

- Potential big data collaboration ideas following Ed Lazowska's Organick Lectures last week
- CHPC FY15 budget
- FY14 end-of-year equipment acquisition priorities for CHPC
- CHPC service focusing

**Potential big data collaboration ideas following Ed Lazowska's Organick Lectures last week**

Ed Lazowska of the University of Washington gave a lecture ([slides found here](#)) about Big Data. Kobus Van der Merwe briefed the portfolio on the presentation, in which Lazowska said the driving force behind UW's eScience Institute is investing in people and software rather than hardware. Lazowska said the idea was that if everyone was going to start doing big-data research, the eScience group should help them do it better. There is also significant cross-departmental collaboration. Van der Merwe said some elements could be adapted to work here to strengthen research computing.

Van der Merwe had a conversation with network architect Joe Breen following the lecture, and Breen wrote a list of the U's research computing strengths and opportunities. The first area for improvement was creating a strong, cohesive vision. Tom Cheatham and Steve Corbató noted there are several places on campus doing big-data computing that don't tend to have cross-functional collaboration. Perhaps reaching out to those groups would be beneficial. Van der Merwe said UW is good at encouraging people to use its services who may not have the inclination on their own.

Cheatham noted that the Center for High Performance Computing (CHPC) in the past had focused on people and not hardware, and was discouraged from seeking grants. That has changed, and CHPC is trying to find a balance between people, hardware, and software. Carleton DeTar agreed, saying if you don't find balance you risk losing customers. Corbató noted there is not much work at CHPC dedicated to assisted software development. Julia Harrison said potential CHPC users who need that level of coding were directed to the Technology Ventures Commercialization Office for consultation in the past.

Going forward, more staff time will be spent doing this and support of staff salaries can be paid by those requiring these services. Cheatham suggested increasing that work could be beneficial.

**CHPC FY15 budget**

Corbató said CHPC has reacted to funding and staff cuts by seeking more grant funding. Two years ago, CHPC’s non-direct F&A funding was 13 percent, and this year it was 28 percent. He said CHPC is working with other HPC centers to share resources, and it is also emphasizing the work done in the hospital field. The overall budget is similar to what it was after the 20 percent staff cut, while budgeting for a new CHPC director. There are higher-than-expected costs for Downtown Data Center space, and that is an ongoing discussion. There are not enough members present to officially endorse the budget, so the group will seek that step via email.

**FY14 end-of-year equipment acquisition priorities for CHPC**

The most common requests Cheatham has heard are for more cycles, storage, and GPUs, and for a hierarchal storage system. Harrison said the backup storage system is barely sufficient for the task and consumes more staff time than it should. The current system, Cheatham said, is akin to backing up an entire DVD collection on CDs. Corbató notes this is also an issue that concerns the Scientific Computing and Imaging Institute and Marriott Library. DeTar adds School of Computing to that group.

There is talk about forming an advisory committee to look into the issue.

**CHPC service focusing**

CHPC staff have expressed concerns over workload after the staff reduction, and there is worry that could lead to burnout. Harrison asked the staff for ideas about which services could be cut to focus on core competencies, but the response was not overwhelming. She said the staff is loathe to cut services, so the committee discussed some options, including reducing desktop support and website content management unless an entity is paying the cost of that support. Corbató said a proposal for solutions will come back to the portfolio at a later date.

Action summary			
Action	Topic	Person/Group	Next step
Vote	CHPC FY15 budget	Portfolio	The group will vote over email whether to endorse the proposed CHPC budget.
Action item	CHPC service focusing	Steve Corbató	A proposal to reduce the staff workload by potentially trimming services or seeking support dollars will be drafted for portfolio review.