INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE:

ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18

The committee met six times last year.

At our October meeting, CUIT VP Gaspare LoDuca gave his annual outline of the State of Columbia IT, focusing on current efforts to more than double Columbia's wireless capability, and to upgrade the Rolm Phone system, which dates from 1986. Another asset in need of an upgrade is the Student Information System (SIS), which now depends on a 1991 mainframe. CUIT has developed a set of transitional workarounds, including a new web front end and an adaptation of another platform—Student Services Online (SSOL)—for storing student data. This workaround is expected to last several years, long enough for vendors to come up with a system truly suited to Columbia's needs. Mr. LoDuca is also expanding High Performance Computing, focusing on HPC clusters in Business and Engineering. He is also responsible for implementing two major data privacy protocols: the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) from the European Union, and special requirements for Confidential Unclassified Information (CUI). He also reported progress on what he called PI Dashboards, a new way for Principal Investigators to review their grant spending quickly and in detail. This effort is one response to widespread complaints from researchers and administrators about the inconvenience and opacity of the incumbent program, Accounting and Reporting at Columbia, or ARC.

In November the committee heard from Maneesha Aggarwal, CUIT's AVP for Academic IT Solutions, with additional comments from Michele Hall of the Center for Teaching and Learning, about the transition from Sakai to Canvas, the new online learning platform on Courseworks. The meeting was a lively review of both the strengths and weaknesses that faculty have encountered with the new platform. Ms. Aggarwal asked to have all questions about Canvas forwarded to her group.

The issue that received the most attention from the committee last year was the chronic shortage of adequate classroom space at Columbia. University Registrar Barry Kane addressed this issue at two of our meetings. In December he began with some news on future classroom schedule procedures: A platform used for scheduling student events and activities (the Events Management System, or EMS) has been successfully adapted to the task of scheduling Columbia's classes, with some gains in efficiency of classroom usage. But the future for the supply of classroom space is beset with obstacles for which no solution is in sight: the unceasing increase in student enrollments year upon year, and the long-term constraints on Columbia's supply of space, even with the current expansion into Manhattanville and the freeing up of Uris Hall in a few years. One result may be an acceleration of the inescapable trend toward online instruction.

In April, at our joint meeting with the Education and Libraries committees, Mr. Kane addressed the issue of classrooms again. He highlighted the continuing problem of the large fraction of classrooms that are controlled by schools and departments rather than the registrar, as well as the challenge of access to new classroom spaces, now and in the future. This year Mr. Kane will pursue the issue of classroom space with a committee better suited to this task than ours— Campus Planning and Physical Development.

In January the committee discussed cyberbullying and a host of related issues, including the need to balance Columbia's commitments to a secure and civil online community and to freedom of speech in developing standards of online conduct. Active participants included Sen. Susan McGregor (NT, Journalism), leader of a study group on computer security that is supported by President Bollinger's office; committee member Joel Rosenblatt, Director of Computer and Network Security, CUIT; and Jeri Henry, Associate Vice President, Student Conduct and Community Standards, Office of University Life. Discussion focused on how incidents should be reported, and considered cases drawn from online settings ranging from student governance and course discussion groups to personal harassment and bullying.

In February Heather Parlier, Associate Provost for Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, reported on a long-delayed project to improve the Recruiting Academic Personnel System (RAPS), a platform for managing academic job applications and searches.

In the current year there are some useful follow-ups to last year's discussions: Heather Parlier is now rolling out a new and improved RAPS, and showed it to us at our first meeting this fall. And the PI Dashboard idea mentioned by Mr. LoDuca a year ago has matured into MyGrants, a promising new tool for tracking grant finances that has been tested at the medical campus and is now being rolled out on Morningside, to positive reviews from researchers. Rudi Odeh-Ramadan, VP for Research Administration, and her aide Halayn Hescock gave a demonstration of it to our committee last month.

For the IT Committee,

Sens. Julia Hirschberg (Ten., SEAS) and Matthew Jones (Ten., A&S/SS), co-chairs

2017-18 Information and Communications Technology Committee

Ten.	Gur Huberman		BUS	sen
Ten.	Julia Hirschberg	Co-Chair	SEAS	sen
Ten.	Matthew L. Jones	Co-Chair	A&S/SS	sen
Ten.	Itsik Pe'er		SEAS	nonsen
Ten.	Henry Spotnitz		P&S	sen
Stu.	Ramond Curtis		GS	sen
Stu.	Tiago Ornaghi		JOURN	sen
Libraries	Teresa Harris		Libraries	sen
Admin. Staff	Joel Rosenblatt		Morningside / Lamont	sen
Research Officers	Nancy J. LoIacono		Research Officers - Professional	nonsen
Admin.	Maneesha Aggarwal		Admin	nonsen
Admin.	Gaspare S. LoDuca		Admin	nonsen
Alum.	Stephen Negron		Alum.	nonsen
Admin.	Ellen Binder		Adm	observer
Admin. Staff	Barry Kane		Morningside / Lamont	observer
Admin. Staff	Sandesh Tuladhar		Morningside / Lamont	observer