Reimagining ITSAC

Information Technology Student Advisory Committee (ITSAC)

Annual Report

2012-2013

Contents

I.   Year in Review

The Information Technology Student Advisory Committee (ITSAC) serves as an advisory committee for Information Technology (IT) on campus on matters dealing with IT programs and services for students.

ITSAC Yesterday

Since it was formed in 2003, the focus of the committee has stayed true to its original purpose of providing a forum for dialogue with students about IT programs and services, reviewing those programs and services, and recommending changes in an annual report. Times have changed; today's student is arriving on campus much more technically adept than students were when ITSAC was first created. Students are communicating using newer channels supported by technology advances, such as Instant Messaging, Twitter, Facebook and phone messaging (iChat, BBM, SMS).

ITSAC Today

Over the past year ITSAC went in a new direction. Rather than report back on current technology in use on campus and find out more about current problems students were having, the ITSAC student representatives were encouraged to brainstorm about how current technology trends and tools could make their lives easier by supporting them in their journey of learning and exploration.

The ITSAC students chose two main topics to focus on:

1. enabling students to have accurate and up-to-date information related to their activities on campus accessible simply and easily from their mobile devices
2. helping students leverage cloud services to support their learning activities

The mobile device topic proved large and complex, and became the sole focus of ITSAC for the 2012/2013 year. The main theme of the mobile conversations became *"Set our data free"* – the students championed the cause for the institution to make their data readily available to them so they could consume it in the fashion most conducive to aiding their learning needs. The choice to consume the information in an app, in a calendar, on their phone, or another BYOD (bring-your-own-device) tool would rest with the student.

The ITSAC mobile efforts are captured in the following appendices:

Appendix A: Students & Mobile – What is the issue?

Appendix B: ITSAC Mobile – Phase 1, Phase 2, Phase 3

ITSAC Tomorrow

In light of the learning stemming from experiences of 2012-2013 there should be recognition that ITSAC's focus should reflect new realities and opportunities and address the following issues ahead of its 2013-2014 constitution.

What role(s) should ITSAC play?

Is ITSAC a communication conduit for Institutional IT issues? Are we a consultative body? How do we fit in with other groups and their agendas in order to be most effective?

One of the considerable challenges before us is to understand how ITSAC can integrate most effectively with other ongoing Institutional IT strategies while having an opportunity to bring its own ideas forward. Traditionally it has provided a forum for effective dialogue between students and the service providers on campus, assessing recommending changes or additions to the future directions of these services as they evolve. With program and service providers developing their own real-time or near real-time client feedback mechanisms, the type of information gathering that is generated from ITSAC focusing on critique and suggested remedies runs the risk of being reduced to simply user feedback delivered too late to be of use in the short term.

As a response to this reality, an effort had been made in the 2013 iteration of ITSAC to move away from reviewing IT services broadly and to have the group select a few specific topics it felt was most important to address.   This proved to be engaging for the committee. It selected a number of topics to focus on. However, there was an identifiable disconnect as time went by between what they were pursuing and the presence of projects that were being established on their behalf to address them. In many cases, students are the institutions clients and we make it our job to anticipate the learner's needs and priorities. While laudable and for the most part it should be encouraged heartily, it makes the role of a student advisory committee more challenging and in some cases relegated to simply acting as a post implementation sounding board.

A potential solution to this challenge would be to seek out institutional IT projects and partners ahead of the first meetings in the fall that would welcome ITSAC's participation. We would have these groups identify some output ITSAC could be responsible for and that would be of value.   From this portfolio of projects, the committee could select, as part of its work for the year, those that appeal to them as being timely and of significant interest to their constituents. This could be the first stream.

The second stream could then be for ITSAC to identify issues that it would like to take on that are not yet firmly on anyone else's radar. This would help to ensure that we are not working at cross purposes with other groups. This could even show up as a project within CCS or the CIOs office to give some visibility to the initiative. The topic of cloud based services and how they can be used to help students with their learning and research was identified as being of particular interest for next year.

What opportunities exist to improve the meetings?

In an effort to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the committee it was identified by the group that there was an appetite to have more frequent meetings for shorter periods throughout the year. Rather than monthly two hour meetings, they would like ninety minute meetings every two weeks or three weeks. As well, they suggested having more formalized meeting structure and to have work assigned to members outside of the meeting.

In an effort to have an opportunity for members of the community to interact more with the Committees it is recommended that we have two special meetings within the year in panel format designed to connect the committee to the campus IT service providers themselves. We could include guests to participate for 60 minutes of IT related dialogue with key institutional staff. The first meeting could include an invitation to CCS Managers (Service Owners) to discuss IT issues. The second meeting would include an invitation to departmental IT help desks (CCS, Library, OpenEd, Registrar's Office, etc) to discuss IT issues

How can we get more participation?

It should be recognized that there is certain reluctance on the part of campus student groups to come to meetings. We invite almost twenty student reps (See appendix C) to participate but we do not see meetings with more than 5 or 6 members at the most as the year progresses.

It is recommended that for next year we extend the same invitation but also solicit members for five student members at large (four undergraduate and one graduate). Volunteers would hopefully see this less of an obligation of office and more as an opportunity to get involved in University IT issues outside of student government.

Appendix A

Students & Mobile - What is the issue?

In our monthly meetings, ITSAC student representatives have been asked to identify and prioritize IT related issues they would like to have the group address and make progress on over the year. The group has identified as its top priority this year the desire to enable students to have accurate and up-to-date information related to their activities on campus accessible simply and easily from their mobile devices. To date this discussion has not been tool or technology centred but it is clear to the students that the information they seek does or must exist and that the ability to consume this information in an app, mobile website or standardized data feed is not unreasonable. The students are familiar with at least one android app already developed and released by a student and feel that this should not be beyond our institutional capacity to realize.

ITSAC Chair's Approach

We recognize that this type of project requires time, coordination and participation from many parties working together. ITSAC is also aware that a mobile strategy spearheaded by our CIO/Chief Librarian and our AVP Communications and Public Affairs is forthcoming and will provide leadership around this initiative.   We anticipate that ITSAC's most valuable contribution to the process would be to help determine:

1. What specific challenges students have that they are trying to solve using their mobile devices?
    a. Calendaring
    b. Mapping and way finding
    c. Notifications and alerts
    d. Student planning aids
2. What preferences do students have in terms of organizing and consuming this information?
3. What data and formats are required to answer these questions or to resolve these issues?
4. What authoritative sources may exist for this data within the institution?
5. What pre-consumption management of the data is required?

We would like to design and distribute a survey to the student body from their student leaders to gather the information needed to answer these questions and present the results to CIO/Chief Librarian to move the process forward.
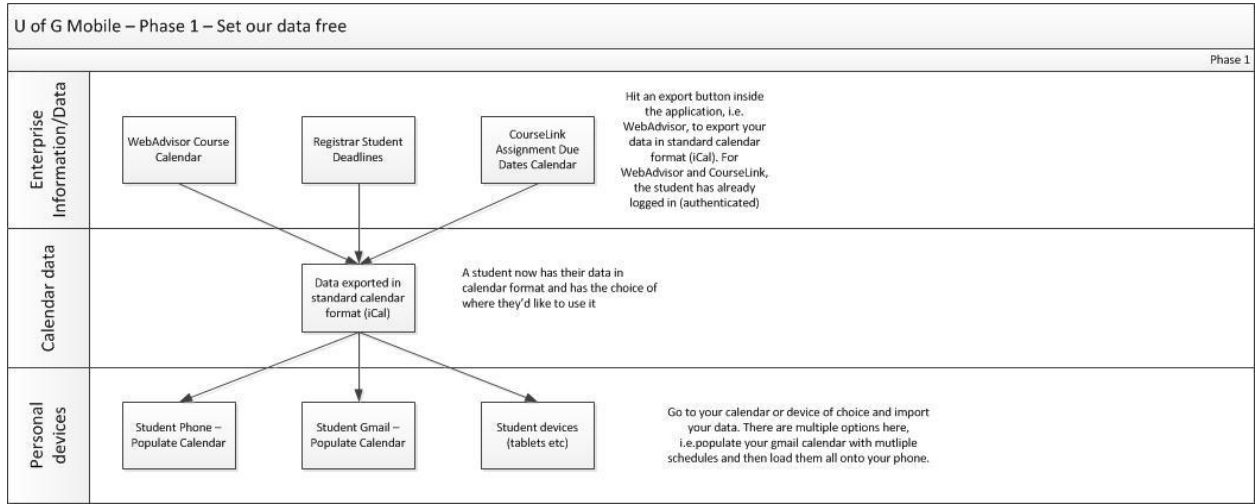
The Ask

We would like to know if ITSAC has a role in the mobile strategy or if we are encouraged to continue to work independently from the consumer's perspective.
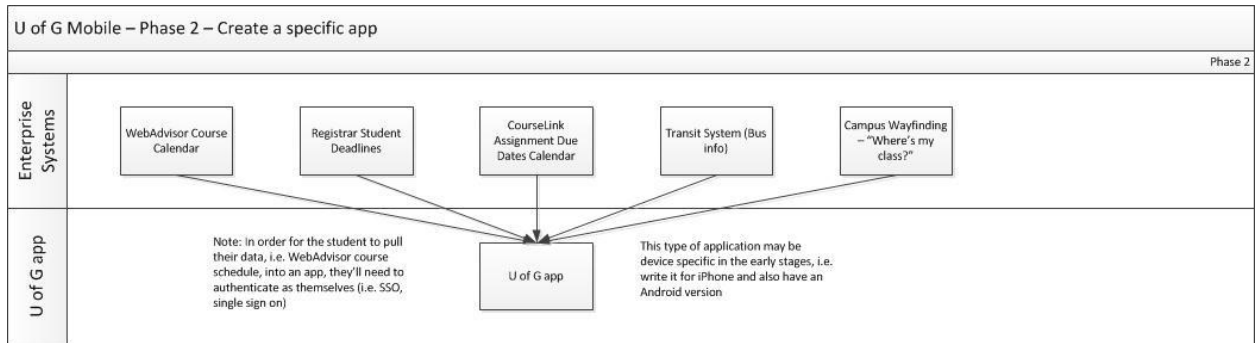
We would like $100 as an incentive prize for the students filling out the survey
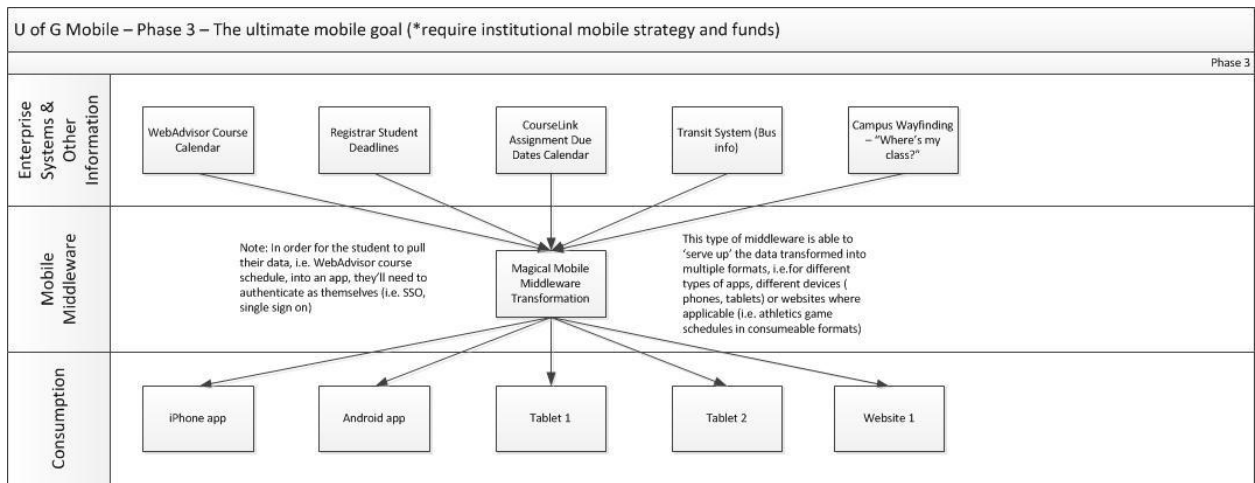
Appendix B

ITSAC Mobile – Phase 1

U of G Mobile – Phase 1 – Set our data free

Phase 1

Enterprise Information/Data

WebAdvisor Course Calendar

Registrar Student Deadlines

CourseLink Assignment Due Dates Calendar

Hit an export button inside the application, i.e. WebAdvisor, to export your data in standard calendar format (iCal). For WebAdvisor and CourseLink, the student has already logged in (authenticated)

Calendar data

Data exported in standard calendar format (iCal)

A student now has their data in calendar format and has the choice of where they'd like to use it

Personal devices

Student Phone – Populate Calendar

Student Gmail – Populate Calendar

Student devices (tablets etc)

Go to your calendar or device of choice and import your data. There are multiple options here, i.e.populate your gmail calendar with mutliple schedules and then load them all onto your phone.

ITSAC Mobile – Phase 2

U of G Mobile – Phase 2 – Create a specific app

Phase 2

Enterprise Systems

WebAdvisor Course Calendar

Registrar Student Deadlines

CourseLink Assignment Due Dates Calendar

Transit System (Bus info)

Campus Wayfinding – "Where's my class?"

U of G app

Note: In order for the student to pull their data, i.e. WebAdvisor course schedule, into an app, they'll need to authenticate as themselves (i.e. SSO, single sign on)

U of G app

This type of application may be device specific in the early stages, i.e. write it for iPhone and also have an Android version

ITSAC Mobile – Phase 3

U of G Mobile – Phase 3 – The ultimate mobile goal (*require institutional mobile strategy and funds)

Phase 3

Enterprise Systems & Other Information

WebAdvisor Course Calendar

Registrar Student Deadlines

CourseLink Assignment Due Dates Calendar

Transit System (Bus info)

Campus Wayfinding – "Where's my class?"

Mobile Middleware

Note: In order for the student to pull their data, i.e. WebAdvisor course schedule, into an app, they'll need to authenticate as themselves (i.e. SSO, single sign on)

Magical Mobile Middleware Transformation

This type of middleware is able to 'serve up' the data transformed into multiple formats, i.e.for different types of apps, different devices (phones, tablets) or websites where applicable (i.e. athletics game schedules in consumeable formats)

Consumption

iPhone app

Android app

Tablet 1

Tablet 2

Website 1

Appendix C: Current Committee Membership

Central Students Association (CSA)	1
Graduate Students Association (GSA)	1
Student Senate Caucus	1
College of Arts Student Union (CASU)	1
College of Biological Science Students Council (CBSSC)	1
Central Veterinary Student Association (CVSA)	1
College of Physical & Engineering Sciences (CPES)	1
College of Social and Applied Human Sciences Student Alliance (CSAHS-SA)	1
Student's Federation of the Ontario Agricultural College (SFOAC)	1
College of Management and Economics (CME)	1
Centre for Students with Disabilities (CSD)	1
Interhall Council	1
Guelph-Humber Student Association (GHSA)	1
CCS Help Centre student	1
CCS Help Desk student	1
CCS staff members	2
ITSIG- Information Technology Special Interest Group (ITSIG)	1
Library Information Technology Services (ITS) staff member	1

Appendix D: Meetings Summary

Sept 30

Guest: Gerrit Bos CIO's Office

Agenda items:

- Reviewed Terms of Reference
- ITSAC report and how it is used on campus
- Identify Issues that can be made the focus of ITSAC this year
- Gerrit to present overview of DRAFT AUP for feedback

Themes Discussed:

- The development of a UofG Smartphone app
- Cloud Services including Dropbox and Google Docs
- Student Government websites in Drupal can't access Google API
- Virtual tour of what othe universities are doing
- Residence file sharing.
- Gryphmail
- Courselink
- e-Resources / Lecture Capture
- residence Wireless access
- NAC Access

October 19

Agenda Items:

- Review Objectives for the year

Themes Discussed:

- Management response to report last year
- Input we can provide to steering committee
- Moving the idea of Smartphone app forward
- Look to existing Gryphphone app for ideas
- Identified IT related concerns (IT Bytes)
    - MacKinnon lab downstairs, machine are too old,
    - Access to SPSS outside the lab would be desired
    - Student webmasters seek improved response from web solutions

November 2

Agenda Items:

- Follow up on IT bytes
- Additional discussion regarding themes we wish to pursue

Themes Discussed:

- Cloud services are relevant to students and should focus on collaboration
- Calendaring. Where does the data lie? How can it be presented

November 23

- Dave Not Present for ITIL Training and Exam

January 17

Guests: Brenda Whiteside AVPSA

Agenda:

- Roundtable intro of Students reps
- Ruth to outline ITSAC focus of mobile and cloud applications
- Review Gryphpphone App as example of what works and how studnets use it

- Introduce our approach of indemnifying where to find the information needed on campus
- Ask Brenda to discuss where mobile sits with exec
- Discuss with Brenda ITSAC vision of mobile data strategy and how it can participate

Themes Discussed:

History of Mobile on campus

Concern over risks that exist when incorrect data is utilized

Should the institution pursue an iterative process or develop more complete strategy

The University should not allow itself to fall behind in mobile strategy

We should focus on 5 themes

- D2L Calendar
- Web Advisor
- Deadlines
- Transit
- Way finding

Surveying Students for their level of interest and functional priorities

March 1

Guests Gayleen Gray Associate Director CCS

Agenda:
- Student survey/input on what they'd like to see in a mobile strategy
- discuss our objectives, how we'll move forward on this, and how we'll get it done in the next month

Themes Discussed:

- Is Lynda.com something that students would consider useful
- We currently have no UofG app for mobile
- Data ownership is key to navigating this. CCS does not own data
- Mobility to date has not been a strategic priority but approached holistically
- CCS has Undergrad researcher for summer to look at that this
- How can we gauge student perspective other than survey
- We should look to determine the priorities of the app and move to make these a reality
- Calendaring is seen as problematic as data exists in many places

April 5

Guests: Kyle Mackie and Scott Merrett from OpenED

Agenda:

- Discuss D2L Courselink
- Discuss lessons learned from this year's ITSAC
- Recommendations for next year

Themes Discussed:
- OpenEd is revamping their help files
- AODA Accessibility training for all instructors in alliance with HREO
- Usability is impacted when faculty do not use common approaches to representing information within Courselink. OpenEd interested in determining hoe the student voice could be included in design
- Default templates inside Courselink should reflect students desire for some standardization
- Course dates that exist in Courselink are populated by Faculty and as such may or may not exist
- Lessons learned:
- Mid-Week is preferred for meetings rather than end of week
- Bi-weekly 90 minute meetings preferred to monthly 150 minute meetings
- Chair/Vice to speak less
- Assign tasks to committee outside of meetings
- Topic discussion should precede guest speakers by 30 minutes
- Clarity desired in terms of purpose and output of group
- Focus on more, smaller outcomes rather than one large one
- More blue sky discussions and less focus on identifying and discussing problems
- Desire to have ITSAC influence more future directions
- Try to develop continuity of participation in membership from student groups
- More representation at the table would be preferred