

Constitution of the MTU System Administration Council

Ratified: December 19, 1995

Amended: July 31, 1997

Name

The name of this organization is MTU System Administration Council and can be referred to as mtusysadm for discussion purposes.

Constituents

The principle mission of the University is education, research, and public service, as outlined in *MTU's Strategic Plan*. To assist in accomplishing this mission, MTU uses technology and, more specifically, computers and computing-related technology. *Every University department¹ which uses or supports computer systems and MTU's network is a constituent of this Council.*

Responsibility and Authority

Basic operation and support of departmental computing resources are the responsibility of the department. If the actions of a department, however, affect other departments or campus-wide resources and services, then those issues will be brought to the Council. Disputes between two departments should be handled between themselves, unless a broader audience is needed.

1. Please refer to *Definitions* on page 7 for information on how "department" is used in this document.

Full Council. The CEx *Computer System Administration Guidelines* outlines that

Departments are accountable through their system administrator to the University for the participation in the technical development, deployment, and maintenance of campus network applications and adherence to campus technical standards.

September 27, 1994

The Council has the responsibility and authority to consider, decide, and recommend reasonable, campus-wide, technical standards for issues determined by the Computer Advisory Committee (CAC), Information Technology (IT), participating departments, or the technical community of the University. These standards are recorded as “MTU RFCs” (or MTU Request For Comment), similar to those used to run the Internet. The RFCs, after approval, are considered recommendations to the CAC and must be submitted to their Standards Subcommittee for approval and subsequent archiving.

The RFCs are approved/rejected by consensus vote to ensure that all departments can comply. However, alternative technical methods, techniques, protocols, and procedures may be used by a department unless they interfere with the established MTU RFCs or compromise the integrity of other departmental efforts, MTU’s network or MTU’s presence on the Internet.

The Council also has the responsibility to communicate, cooperate and coordinate its activities with the CAC and to assure all technical issues of interest to the campus can be discussed and addressed in an open and collegial environment. Decisions that affect University policy, other than those relating to technical issues, must be referred by the Council to the appropriate person/University committee for consideration, input, and combined judgement.

The Council will also function as a subcommittee of the CAC and the chair of the Council is a voting member of the CAC. This ensures that technical ramifications of decisions can be heard and the main issues of the Council are taken formally to the CEx. The Council will also give reports to the CAC at each meeting, similar to the other subcommittees.

Subcommittees. Subcommittees can be formed with an *ad hoc*, specific, technology-related charge and last only a few months, or they can have an ongoing charge.

The subcommittees will make written recommendations to the Council as a whole after their findings are completed. The chair of a subcommittee has the responsibility to facilitate a decision on the subcommittee’s report. If the report is voted down, the subcommittee must reconvene and reconsider its recommendations, unless the Council decides otherwise. The Subcommittee serves at the pleasure of the Council, and only the Council can vote as to whether the subcommittee can disband and/or the topic be dropped.

If the subcommittee’s report affects policy at a higher level, the chair of the Council has the responsibility to take the report to the appropriate person/University committee for a decision.

Functions

Members. Each member of the Council is responsible to his or her department for representing the home department's views and for informing the department of the on-going discussions and the ramifications of the proposed standards to gather input for final decisions.

Technical decisions of the Council can have ramifications on departmental budgets, procedures, services, etc. It is not always obvious what the ramifications of a technical decision are. *Therefore, it is imperative that the departments as a whole understand the impact of discussions and make their views known to the Council through their representative.* Members are subsequently responsible for taking final Council decisions back and communicating them to departments.

Functions

The functions of the Council are derived from the *System Administration Guidelines* passed by the Computer Executive Committee (CEX) in September 1994. These are

- Assistance with hiring and analysis of support needs
- Education among the members of the Council
- Communication and coordination of technical standards and issues across campus
- Council management

In general, the Council will function as a forum for technical issues regarding the interoperability of networked computer devices. It also will function as a communication link among technical staff across campus.

Assistance with hiring and analysis of support needs. The Council, upon request, can assist departments with planning and evaluation of system support needs and hiring of new systems employees.

1. Assistance with hiring at request of department. The council can assist with job descriptions, questions, and interviewing.
2. Analysis of support needs. The council can assist in the
 - evaluation of performance / configuration of system, and
 - evaluation of support personnel needs.

A standing system support subcommittee will be created to develop criteria for analysis of system and support needs for campus, focusing on the department level. The subcommittee will also facilitate departmental requests for help on this matter.

Education among the members of the council. Ongoing education is vital to being competent as a systems professional. The Council will function as an information/methods sharing forum for members and other network and system administrators. Members are assumed to have basic knowledge of network and system administration.

Education efforts include conference trips, open houses, demonstrations, publications, and attending council meetings focused on:

1. MTU specific technical procedures, methods, and issues, and

Operational procedures

2. new technology and techniques to assist individuals to do their jobs better.

A standing education subcommittee will be created to develop an education plan for the Council. The subcommittee will also make recommendations to the Council for spending the annual education budget and setting up educational opportunities of interest to the Council.

Communication and coordination of technical standards and issues across campus. MTU is a distributed computing environment and as such relies heavily on strong communication ties among system administrators for system integration and staff redundancy. The Council will recommend campus-supported technical methods, techniques, and procedures that will work with the current network topology and application configurations. These “standards,” similar to Internet RFCs, are supported but not mandated by this Council. Alternative technical methods, techniques, protocols, and procedures are allowed unless they compromise the integrity of the network and campus network applications. Communication and coordination entails:

1. discussing, deciding, disseminating technical standards
2. communicating to:
 - CAC
 - departments
 - newsgroup / on-line users
3. coordinating
 - covering for absences
 - sharing resources and information
 - implementing new methods or procedures

Council management. The Council is a fully functioning decision-making body at MTU and as such is responsible for their ongoing operations and communications of its decisions to the rest of campus. Officers will be elected and charged with communicating to the members and to other groups decisions the Council has made. The Council must facilitate technical decisions both internal and external to the group.

Operational procedures

Membership. Each department or constituent has a representative. However, a member can represent more than one department.

The member name will be put forth by each department and the person must meet the requirements outlined below.

1. Members are knowledgeable about departmental technology needs. Members of the Council must be knowledgeable about current and future department plans and budgets and how technology could or will be integrated into these plans.

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2. Members represent the views of the sponsoring department. This includes student uses of technology; faculty research, academic, and related efforts; and staff support efforts. How Council members gather this information is the responsibility of the department and themselves.
3. Members are technical, MTU employees who actively support the system and network inside the department they represent. Council members must be involved in both the department plans and the implementations of the technical standards. This is so they understand the technical ramifications and possible related budgetary, and procedural implications for the department.

Initial membership roster will be solicited from departments. Departments can change their representative if they feel their best interest is not being served. There are no terms. The new member, however, must meet the membership criteria.

Council will vote on accepting new members.

Meetings. Standing, open meetings of the Council will be biweekly and open to campus. Closed meetings will be called on an *ad hoc* basis to discuss impending campus network security issues. After the incident is resolved, the meeting will be recorded.

Leadership of the Council. There will be three officers of the Council: chair, vice-chair, and secretary. [*Amended July 31, 1997*]

- The chair of the council will direct meetings and function as the CAC representative and liaison. He or she will also set the agenda and times for the next meeting.
- The vice-chair will direct meetings in the absence of the chair and take meeting minutes in the absence of the secretary. He or she will also be responsible for keeping the Council membership list up to date.
- The secretary will take meeting minutes and attendance as well as be responsible for publishing and archiving meeting minutes and other Council documents. He or she will also collect absentee ballots for upcoming votes.

Leadership positions will have a term of one year. Nominations for officers will be sent to the secretary in June with elections taking place at the meeting during the first two weeks in July. Officers will be elected through a majority vote of a quorum of the members.

Proposals for MTU RFCs. A topic or issue becomes a proposal when a written recommendation is submitted to the Council by a member of the campus community. A council member must be named as the sponsor of the proposal to ensure that requested information is provided concerning the issue, a decision is made, and the solution is implemented, if needed.

To change an RFC, a proposal is submitted to create a new RFC, superceding the existing one. If passed, the old RFC will be altered to refer to the new one.

Subcommittees. Subcommittees are formed by Council vote and are given their charge by the Council Chair. Subcommittees serve at the pleasure of the Council and must

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return their written recommendations to the Council in a timely fashion, as set by the Council Chair.

Subcommittees will pick their own chair who is responsible for communication to the Council concerning information about and progress of their charge. This Chair is the sponsor of their proposal.

Voting. All voting, except for electing officers, is done by consensus. A proposal passes if there are no objecting votes. Officers are elected by majority vote of Council quorum.

Proposals are discussed for at least one meeting. After discussion is over, a call for a vote is made for the next meeting and appears on the next meeting's agenda. At the vote meeting, a member may delay the vote to the next meeting. Only one delay period is allowed per proposal.

A voting quorum includes both the members present at the voting meeting and absentee ballots sent to secretary prior to the meeting.

If a member votes no on a proposal, his or her reasons for doing so will be recorded in the minutes.

If the Council does not approve a proposal, the chair of the Council must then decide whether to submit the proposal for consideration of the CAC, begin a Request For Action process (described below), or forward the proposal back to the sponsor and those casting dissenting votes for further consideration. Subsequent changes to the proposal must be approved by the full Council.

Refer to page 8 for a flowchart outlining the voting process.

Funding. The Council is funded through the annual budgetary process. Currently, a stipend is allocated to the Council to be used as matching funds for education opportunities. Additional monies should be requested from the Provost in the fall/winter of the year, similar to other new/ongoing requests.

Changes to this constitution. Changes can be made to this constitution during the summer of each year. A member can put forth a proposal/amendment, and the Council then discusses and votes on the changes.

Request For Action. An RFA is raised in response to an impasse in voting on a proposal. An RFA may be raised by any member to the Council Chair. The Chair and involved parties must follow the escalation procedure below when a RFA is called:

1. The parties talk to each other and try to resolve the issue themselves. If this is not possible then the RFA proceeds to step 2.
2. The Council officers will meet with the parties and negotiate an agreement. If no agreement is made then the RFA proceeds to step 3.
3. The Chair will meet with the parties and the following people to negotiate an agreement:

Definitions

Secretary, Department head/chair/manager (or designee), Director of Information Technology (or designee), and other people as requested.

Definitions

Department. Department is used as a generic term to refer to both academic departments within a college, administrative departments, Information Technology areas (such as Distributed Computing Services), research institutes, and schools.

Quorum. 2/3 of the Council membership.*[Amended July 31, 1997]*

Technical standard. Decisions of the Council appear as “MTU RFCs” (or MTU Request For Comment), similar to those used to run the Internet. These RFCs are recommended campus-supported technical methods, techniques, protocols, and procedures which will work with the network topology and application configurations. Alternative technical methods, techniques, protocols, and procedures may be used by a department unless they interfere with the established MTU RFCs or compromise the integrity of other departmental efforts or the MTU or external network.

Voting Process

