QUEENSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE

COMMITTEE on COMPUTER RESOURCES

COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, MARCH 16th , 2006, at 2 PM

Committee members in attendance: Chair Thorsen, Professors Burleson, Ellerton, Ford, Mangra, Noh, IT Director Sherman.

I.   The minutes for the CCR meeting of 2/23/06, as they were corrected in the present meeting, were approved.
II. CCR newsletter tasks have been assigned, and a timetable has been created. Please refer to the document that was distributed in the last meeting, outlining these items.
III. No progress has made regarding dissemination of instructions on how to change individual passwords embedded in the Exchange server. IT Director Sherman stated that these matters are currently being addressed, and that sending out an instructional email to all faculty and staff is on the schedule. IT Director Sherman assured the committee that all of this will be accomplished by the next CCR meeting. Chair Thorsen sent an email to Ralph Romanelli and Emil Perinnell regarding this matter. A follow-up regarding this topic will be an agenda item for the next meeting.
IV. IP blocking: no response has been received regarding the email sent by Chair Thorsen addressing this concern. IT Director Sherman mentioned that he has just put into place a network appliance (Barracuda) to detect spyware, hacking sites, phishing, fraud, and peer-to-peer file-sharing. The device is currently in test mode. IT Director Sherman stressed that the program was chosen solely to address the above concerns, and not to at all to limit any kind of access.
   A.   Prof. Ellerton asked if there was the possibility of a disclaimer message that could automatically appear as a pop-up window on any workstation, whenever any site is blocked. The message could state something to the effect of "if you think this site is blocked in error, please compose a message and hit the 'send' button…" IT Director Sherman will look into this.
   B.   Chair Thorsen noted that if one is on a public machine, one may not be able to send out an email form addressing the problem. Several committee members have confronted this. Sending an email form via a remote PC is similarly problematic.   IT Director Sherman will look into this issue tomorrow.
V. Discussion of the STATEMENT FROM THE FACULTY COUNCIL COMPUTER UTILIZATION AND EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE REGARDING THE BROOKLYN COLLEGE POLICY OF IP-BLOCKING
   A.   There was discussion centered on the content found throughout much of page 2 of the document, involving the general efficacy of IP-Blocking.

B.   Page 2 confirms that Barracuda Networks is also the vendor of Brooklyn College's system.

C.   Page 3, paragraph 1 confirms that no logs will be kept of access attempts by faculty or students.

D.   There was a strong consensus that our IT department, like Brooklyn College's, is fully committed to academic freedom, and is only trying to defend systems and servers from malicious attacks, as elucidated in paragraph 3 of page 3.

E.   The following question arose, catalyzed by the second bullet point below "In conclusion…" on page 3 of the document: should the faculty have a voice in what's being blocked? Prof. Ellerton opined that as long as you can obtain access to an initially blocked site after you request it, there shouldn't be a problem.

F.   Brooklyn College seems to have denied faculty a voice on these matters. IT Director Sherman referred the committee to the paragraph on page 1 that begins "The only rationale for IP-address blocking…" IT Director Sherman is not considering the "porn" issue at all as part of the rationale; this is purely about spyware, adware, etc.

G.   Chair Thorsen warned that the faculty is nonetheless liable to see IP-Blocking as an assault on academic freedom, especially if there is any perception that allegedly salacious sites are being restricted due to content. Perhaps we need to write and disseminate a very pure description of intent, function, product, etc.

H.   IT Director Sherman is composing a general email to describe what this product does.

I.   Chair Thorsen endorsed the idea of an email to faculty, staff and students describing the role and function of Barracuda, stressing the spyware/adware issue.

J.   A question arose regarding whether an emailed request for access to a blocked site could be anonymous. IT Director Sherman felt that this process would be quite time-consuming. Chair Thorsen suggested that, in the email form, the name of the requester could be optional, via the implementation of an unrequired field.

VI. New Business.

A.   IT Director Sherman would like the campus to be reminded that attaching unauthorized hardware to QCC computers is not allowed. This will be included in the newsletter as an item.

B.   A motion was made and seconded to change the final CCR meeting to May 11th at 2 PM, as opposed to the meeting currently scheduled for May 25th. There was unanimous approval.

VII. Meeting adjourned at 2:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Prof. Geoffrey Burleson
Secretary