IT concerns: The committee met with Dr. Pierce Cantrell, Vice President for Information Technology concerning the plan to migrate e-mail from an on-campus operation to Google Apps for students and Microsoft Exchange for faculty. In order to simplify communications with students, individual faculty would also be permitted to have a Google Apps account if desired. Based on a 'disastrous' implementation of Microsoft Office 365 for e-mail service at UT (confirmed by their faculty attending the joint meeting) the Microsoft Exchange version for faculty and staff will be maintained on campus using CIS Exchange infrastructure. The student migration to Google Apps will be started in the fall semester, with faculty/staff to follow later in the fall. All participants will be able to keep their current @tamu.edu e-mail addresses.

Retirees and former students can be included at very low cost via Google Apps.

Faculty mailboxes will be allocated 2 GB, with additional storage available at $2.30/GB/year.

These changes will likely coincide with plans to encrypt all data transfers by Google and Microsoft.

Some Colleges (COALS for example) may continue to use existing services, especially where non-College Station personnel are involved.

Wellness exam problems: The committee discussed problems that have arisen concerning the Wellness exam that is required to avoid an extra $30/month health insurance charge. Several incidents show that there is a disconnect among intent and administration of the requirement instituted by our System Benefits Office, doctors and BCBS. As an example, a colleague was told that he could not discuss a concern for arthritis in a hand and still have the visit count as a wellness exam, and another was told that having blood-profiles meant the Wellness category could not be used! While both of these appear to be misinterpretations, they still raise concerns. Speaker Daugherity says that it is critical that the wellness exam be listed as the first item (all procedures are now given a numbered code) for BCBS to record a doctors visit as such. It would make more sense if a wellness exam code listed in any box could count and if annual physicals would also satisfy the criterion. (One doctor said the code numbers are actually the same.)

A second issue that came up was that as a result of the large cut to Medicare funding, Medicare has opted to drop coverage of several expensive drugs. (For example, rather than a $30 co-pay, paying $360/month for a prescription for Advair, an asthma medication.) Another is a diabetes medication that seems optimal for many patients. While this may be especially an issue for retirees, the ruling also included a clause saying that insurance companies could adjust their formularies to match that of Medicaid/Medicare. It seems plausible that most companies will adopt the same restrictions, which can only be avoided by a special prior authorization from a doctor along with verification that lower cost drugs
are not effective, but then the prescription will still require a substantially larger co-pay. It is my understanding that these authorizations will be required on an annual basis.

Library internet access for former students: In response to a query from a Faculty member concerning online access to the library for the new TMAU components and possibility for former students to take advantage of our online access to journals and materials to promote the TAMU goal of creating ‘lifetime learners’.

According to librarian Dorothy Fos, “As far as Former Students, they do not have remote access to our Electronic Resources because our contracts with the vendors that supply those resources restricts access to currently enrolled students, faculty and staff. Like any Community User they may come into the library and request a temporary user name and password that will allow them to access the resources on our computers. They will not be able to gain access on their laptops or wireless devices.” Also, retired faculty still have access but retired staff do not.

And from Eric Hartnet with regard to the new components: “– since they are now part of Texas A&M University they should be covered by our license agreements”.

Bicycles on campus: The committee met with Ron Steedly, the alternative transportation expert with Transportation Services and two the members of an external review team that has been hired to produce a bicycle master plan for the campus. We pointed out that at least several times a year the issue came up of a faculty senator nearly being hit (or being hit) by a bicycle while walking on a sidewalk. The outside planners were surprised to learn that the campus police do not have authority to issue tickets to cyclists for being on sidewalks. Ron Steedly suggested that it may be possible, especially if required bicycle registration can be adopted, to have citations that can be satisfied through completion of a rigorous safety course rather than fines that are not paid to the University. The planners held several open forums in addition to meeting with the Senate planning committee which were heavily attended by cyclists who were able to point out danger spots and provide suggested alternatives that would benefit cyclists, pedestrians and drivers.

Submitted by Clint Magill, Planning Committee Chair on behalf of members Judith Ball, Doug Biggs, Clare Gill, Janet Hammer, Angie Hill Price, Beth McNeill, Sorin Popescu, Laura Sare, Emet Schneiderman, Gary Varner and Chuck Wakefield.