Research Computing Advisory Committee (RCAC)
Minutes June 13, 2011 (taken by Erik Deumens)

Present: Paul Avery, Erik Deumens, Lauren McIntyre

Update on hiring

The HPC Center has added the following staff members to its staff:

1. Yu Fu, PhD in Physics, will continue to support the high-energy physics CMS experiment. His salary is funded by a grant in support of that experiment he will join the HPC Center staff part time as soon as we figure out a funding formula for the dual effort. The support of the CMS experiment also is part of the Sunshine Grid New Florida Cluster award to the collaboration between FSU, UF, and USF.
2. Ying Zhang, masters in Computer Science, will start June 29 to support applications including parallel performance tuning.
3. Oleksandr "Alex" Moskalenko, PhD in Genetics and Molecular Biology, will start August 1 and will be the lead of the HPC Center's effort to support computational biology.

Furthermore, the following staff additions are being worked on:

1. Matt Gitzendanner, PhD in Botany, is associate scientist in the Florida Museum for Natural History. We are trying to hire him at .25 FTE to help with training and organization of classes and workshops.
2. The Sunshine Grid grant provides funding for a web content specialist who will be responsible for gathering and maintaining information for researchers about resources available. We hope to hire a person this summer.

The Department of Physics provides office space in NPB for the HPC center staff. The Genetics Institute provides an office for Alex Moskalenko. The plan is that Alex will spend the majority of his time in the GI.

Support for Computational Biology

The HPC center is working together with the GI to bring support for computational biology community on this campus to the next level.

1. The existing Fisher cluster will be upgraded with a new 10 gigabit switch so that it can be used productively for another two years.
2. A new cluster will be built targeted and configured to optimize running computational biology applications in the HPC Center machine room. Alex Moskalenko, the new hire, will be the lead in this deployment project.
3. Several computational biologists have already come forward to make use of HPC center services. One 48 core node has been upgraded from 128 GB to 512 GB of RAM to support applications that need large amounts of RAM.

4. The TechFee project for a resource for teaching was not funded. The committee discussed the possibility to commit significant resources on the Fisher cluster to support the computational biology courses after the new cluster for computational biology comes online this summer.

Data Lie Cycle Committee

A list of candidates to either invite as members or to ask for nominations of members has been compiled. Erik Deumens will be the initial chair and set up the committee, but we need to find someone to act as chair.

Strategic plan and its Implementation

It has been brought to the attention of members of the RCAC committee that some elements listed in the research computing section of the strategic plan for IT are not considered high priority at all. For example, it was conveyed that little of the precious resources should be allocated to building databases for collecting information about research projects. Rather simple tools using existing capabilities of PeopleSoft should be used to find out things like the number of grants and award amount faculty who use the HPC Center services have.

It was made very clear that actions like the ones listed in the section above, expansion of staff and building the cluster, are considered very valuable and should be done. However, these are not listed clearly in the strategic plan; they are only implied.

The list of priority actions will be modified to be more explicit about these detailed actions, and to leave off the more general and vague goals.

Next meeting will be Monday June 27 at 9:30 am.