



GEORGIA COURTS AUTOMATION COMMISSION

244 Washington Street, SW, Suite 300

Atlanta, Georgia 30334

December 2005
Report to the Judicial Council

Commission Member Activity

August 2005 Meeting of the Commission

Mindful of the need for a specific Ethics Policy, the Commission took steps toward the development and adoption of such a policy during its August 2005 business meeting. Following consultation with legal counsel, a final version was written and will be presented for adoption to the full commission at its December 2005 meeting. Just as the Strategic Plan adopted by the Commission in August 2004 serves as the official guide for future decisions and actions and to aide with making reasonable, logical, reliable decisions in addressing legislative directives, the new Ethics Policy will provide proper guidance when the interests or concerns of a GCAC member may be seen as competing with the interests or concerns of GCAC.

Court Technology Conference

The Ninth Court Technology Conference (**CTC9**) was held in Seattle, Washington September 13th -15th, 2005 and attended by six members of the commission. A total of 2300 people registered for this conference. Eighty-nine of those people were from Georgia. This is the only conference dedicated exclusively to court technology and historically has had the largest gathering of court and technology professionals in attendance. With the courts now preparing to advance to the "e-everything" level of automation, it was important that the commission members have some exposure to this somewhat new arena in technology and to understand what returns there were for the investment.

The most significant take-away from this years conference was the additional assurance that the XML (eXtended Markup Language) embraced by the commission many years back was the right decision then and is the right decision now for the successful exchange of information, whether court-to-court or court-to-others. The entry into the "e-everything" arena by the entire justice community requires the use of XML to help the courts keep pace with the need for immediate access and exchange of valid information in a fast moving 21st Century. Other significant take-aways include information on the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM) replacement for the Global Justice XML Data Model (GJXDM) and the announcement from Microsoft Corporation that their Windows XP and Windows Office product replacements in 2006 will both be XML compliant. Microsoft demonstrated the output of a .docx document from their newest Microsoft Word product and the exchange of that document with another XML compliant product. The commission's willingness to invest in XML early in the game is now being rewarded with some nice dividends and recognition.

Addressing Legislative Directive

The Georgia Courts Automation Commission continues to address its legislative directive of providing statewide automation and technology assistance to the courts in the areas of data collection, networking, data storage, retrieval, processing, and distribution, with a focus on taking advantage of existing state resources whenever and wherever possible. The Commission consistently looks for opportunities to coordinate state-wide strategies and plans for

incorporating county and local governments into statewide automation efforts. This work includes the review of requirements of the several state agencies for documents, reports, and forms and the consolidation, elimination, or conversion of such documents, reports, and forms to formats compatible with electronic transmittal media. The Commission's primary focus now is on establishing policies and procedures, rules and regulations, and technical and performance standards, and offering advisory services to county and local governments to assist in guiding their efforts toward automating their court procedures and operations.

Project Status Reports

Strategic Technology Planning Project for the Councils of Courts

Working through the separate Council's of Court Judges, the Commission is currently conducting facilitated Strategic Technology Planning sessions for each class of court to clearly define the data elements required by the courts for proficient, day-to-day operation and to establish for the first time specific 2 to 3 year Strategic Technology Plans for each class of court. To date facilitated Data Definition Sessions have been conducted for the Councils of Municipal, Juvenile, State, and Probate Court Judges.

The draft summary report from the Municipal Session was provided to the President of the Council on October 21, 2005 for review and comments. Any requested changes or revisions will be made where applicable and the final report from the session will be produced and provided for their Strategic Planning Session. The initial draft document produced during the Juvenile Session (October 4-7) was requested as a meeting take-away for review by the participants. Comments, changes, and revisions concerning that initial draft document will now be considered and applied where applicable before the draft summary report is produced and provided to the Council. This draft summary report will be submitted to the appropriate Council representative for review and comments and used in their Strategic Planning Session.

The Data Definition Session for the Council of Magistrate Court Judges will take place the last week of January 2006. A Strategic Planning Session for the Council of Juvenile Court Judges is occurring December 6th - 9th. A session for the Council of Municipal Court Judges is scheduled for December 13th - 16th, the Council of Probate Court Judges will have their session January 23rd - 25th and the Council of Magistrate Court Judges has requested their session for the last week of February 2006. The Council of State Court Judges should have the date for their Strategic Planning Session selected and on the calendar before the December meeting of the Judicial Council.

When this Strategic Technology Planning work is completed by the end of the first quarter of 2006, one of the benefits derived will be the development of a diagram of data exchange points between and within the classes of Georgia courts. This end product will then become the initial introduction document for a session between courts and other state agencies regarding how exchanges of information could occur at certain junctures. This effort will begin to move the

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entire justice community closer to the goal of integrated justice and promote the commission's focus on the development of standards.

Every effort has been made to insure that each session is well planned and meets with the success desired for each Council and class of court.

Court Software Certification Project

Columbus State University continues to make progress with the development of the Court Software Certification Program for all software offered to the courts in Georgia. The first phase of this project focuses on the certification of software for the Traffic Courts. A vendor currently offering software to the courts in Georgia has volunteered to be the first up for certification.

The University reports that two graduate and three undergraduate students have worked approximately 19 hours each on this project since April / May of 2005. During August these students completed the process flow diagram describing the methodology that the certification team will follow during the certification process. They developed a template form for use by each evaluator that provides a consistent and uniform foundation to easily build separate, individual forms for testing modules. A blog was constructed (<http://csu-courts.blogspot.com>) for the benefit of communication among members of the certification team and between the software vendors. The Department of Driver Services (DDS) GECPS report was studied and used to develop a sample dataset for evaluating the traffic courts software. Columbus State used the students on a benchmarking of the progress using the AOC Traffic Information Processing System (TIPS) software. The AOC IT group has worked with CSU to develop a test data set for use in the traffic software certification testing process.

Columbus State organized and held an initial invitational meeting with some of the traffic court software vendors on August 30th at the University in Columbus. This meeting yielded among other things a unanimous decision that the certification of software would be a much needed valued added service to the courts. A second invitational meeting was held October 18th at the University with the additional vendors in attendance. As a result of these meetings a Vendors Council is being formed and will be open to all vendors who wish to be represented. This Council will provide opportunity for the vendors to be heard regarding issues affecting their products and services and to receive pre rather than post information from the state to prevent a repeat of what most Georgia court software providers refer to as the HB1EX disaster.

Since the first certification trial run did not occur until well into the fourth quarter of the 2005 the *Intergovernmental Contract for Services* between the GCAC and the University has been extended through December 31, 2005 to allow the additional time needed to overcome the delays encountered and complete the project. Professor Wayne Summers has stated that once they have a chance to test the volunteer vendor's software, they should be ready to submit their final report with detailed procedures for how the software will be tested.

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When completed, this program will be used to certify any software offered for sale and use by any court in Georgia. The seal of approval attached to the software certified via this process will provide prospective buyers and users some level of confidence that it will perform to a standard acceptable to the state.

GCAC Historical Document Preservation Project

The 15 year “paper” history of the Commission, minutes, filed documents, bound documents, flip charts, etc. still need to be organized and prepared for scanning and archiving to insure the proper preservation of these records. A lack of available time and resources prevents any progress on this project. These valuable documents need to be preserved for those who follow after us.

Shared Support Services with Administrative Office of the Courts

During the last week of September 2005 the full time administrative support person for the Information Technology Division at the Administrative Office of the Courts was lost due to a reduction in staff. This person provided administrative support to the GCAC. The Commission has been without dedicated administrative support since that time. Adjustment to this downsized environment has resulted in a less than desired level of service for the Commission and others who rely on response and output from the Commission Office. Options are being explored to remedy what will hopefully be a temporary work overload situation.