

Information Technology Strategic Planning Forum
February 24, 2009 (Tuesday)
11:00AM-12:00PM
Library 11

OVERVIEW OF THE IT STRATEGIC PLAN

Larry Gilbert, Vice-President & CIO of Information Resources & Technology, introduced the members of the IT Steering Committee in attendance. Larry briefly discussed the relationship between technology and the Strategic Plan, and stated that strategic goals are not inclusive of all the services that IT provides. Larry then showed four key questions posed by the Steering Committee and asked for audience input and discussion topics.

OPEN FORUM

Issue 1:

An audience member from the College of Health & Human Services reported that she uses her IT staff members' services a great deal and is worried about losing them to centralization.

Larry Gilbert stated that the goal of the Strategic Plan is not to centralize IT staff members; the plan is intended to institutionalize and find common IT goals and approaches. The plan itself will not change the allocation of resources; resource allocation and prioritization will still rest within each division. Budget cuts may certainly affect some departments' abilities to continue their current IT services, but those decisions will be made by the individual colleges and units and their respective leaders. There are recent examples of individual departments asking the central IT group to assist in meeting needs, but these are all voluntary decisions.

Issue 2:

An audience member expressed concern about faculty not having enough of a role in the planning process, and that the needs of faculty are not reaching the Steering Committee level.

Larry Gilbert stated that the Faculty Senate chose the Chair of the AITC Committee (Bob Buckley) to represent them on the IT Steering Committee. Larry agreed that there has not been enough of a focus on faculty technology needs, both on campus and throughout the CSU. A survey of CSU Faculty completed in 2004 found that there is not enough support for faculty members on how to use the technology that is being encouraged. The IT Steering Committee is very focused on increasing communication with faculty members about technology issues related to teaching and learning through meetings, surveys, focus groups, and forums.

Diego Bonilla, Communication Studies Department, suggested that there be more faculty participation on committees. Larry stated that there is faculty representation on the Steering Committee, as well as several faculty members on the Academic Computing and Administrative Computing Advisory Committees. The committees are working hard to obtain faculty input, and to also relay feedback information to faculty members.

Item 3

Will Vizzard, Chair of the Criminal Justice Division stated that the student records system established by Student Affairs lacks faculty input, and does not include information that department chairs need in order to determine class structures.

Larry stated that this is very much a CSU-wide issue, wherein CMS has been overly focused on finance issues and under-focused on issues related to faculty and student needs. There has been much recent attention to this problem by system-wide CIOs and Provosts. The new Data Warehouse on campus is itself targeted at getting information directly into the hands of faculty, chairs, and deans who need it. Helen Norris, the new Associate Vice President for Administrative Computing Services, created a data warehouse at her previous institution, UC Berkeley. Helen's group is working to get the needed data directly to faculty. Examples of improvements already made to CMS to increase faculty access are intense work on improving the advising module, and continuing work with Academic Affairs and faculty to identify a list of CMS problems that inhibit data availability.

Issue 3:

Will Vizzard further stated that CMS' use of business vocabulary instead of academic vocabulary is not user-friendly. Will reported that there is no way to track a student's advising history. Larry noted that PeopleSoft was not originally created as a student system (rather as a human resources system) which is why it contains so much business terminology. There is a lot of concern about this issue throughout the CSU.

Issue 4:

An audience member asked where money will come from to train faculty on CMS and other new technologies.

Larry stated that a system-wide Academic Technology Committee is discussing priorities for academic technology initiatives, including the lack of funding for training. Larry will attend a meeting in March for campus CIO's where a topic of discussion will be projects that the Chancellor's Office is currently running and if they are benefitting the campuses. On campus, existing positions have been repurposed within IRT to move resources toward enhanced training.

Issue 5:

An audience member asked how new IT services are being advertised to faculty. She suggested advertising on the Sac State website and sending emails to department secretaries and Program Centers so they know how to direct faculty members.

Doug Jackson, IT Steering Committee member and Associate Vice President of Academic Computing Resources, said he holds monthly meetings with the local ITC's to provide them with updated information. Doug is very open to suggestions on further methods of communication.

Larry Gilbert also recommended calling the Help Desk as a single point of contact.

Issue 6:

Will Vizzard reported that some faculty members are not open to learning and/or using new technology. Will stated that colleges want to keep their local ITC's so that they have help learning a new program when they encounter a problem.

Larry Gilbert stated that the Student Technology Center (STC) is targeted to help students with their assignments, and also to help faculty with student assignments that involve technologies that faculty members are either not familiar with or for which they have no class time for training students. Faculty members can go to the STC for assistance, request to have an STC employee present in their classes, or send students for one-on-one or group training.

Issue 7:

Diego Bonilla asked if step-by-step processes for new technologies can be posted online.

Larry Gilbert said this was a good suggestion. The three new training positions mentioned previously will focus both on training and on preparing online documentation and self-help for faculty.

Issue 8:

An audience member expressed concern that there is not sufficient information being provided to faculty about what is available for their use.

Larry Gilbert confirmed that many faculty members have reported that lack of communication is one of their main concerns; a big focus of the IT Strategic Plan is better communications about IT issues.

Issue 9:

Monica Freeman, Global Education, stated that new CMS resources have caused an increase in her workload, and that new IT tools are possibly being implemented without regard to how workload is affected.

Larry Gilbert noted that this has been a very common complaint from staff. CMS has both benefits and drawbacks. As an example of benefits, in the fall Financial Aid was distributed to three times as many students in less time than it was previously. On the negative side, staff members in that area still voiced concerns about having to change their familiar process and adapt to new CMS features. During discussions about changing to a new common financial system within CMS, there has been much discussion about the need to identify campus workload issues. On campus, we are working on creating more training and services for CMS and also making sure the CMS central office understands our concerns about workload.

Issue 10:

Monica Freeman asked how students are involved in the plan evaluation process.

Larry Gilbert responded that he recently asked the Associated Students Board for feedback on the Strategic Plan. When Larry began working at CSUS, he found that IT staff members had often been discouraged from providing assistance to students; the plan reflects a marked change toward focusing on providing IT services to students. For example, the Laptop Loan program and the Student Technology Center are recent IT services targeted at students.

Issue 11:

Diego Bonilla suggested implementing a system to enter input on local ITC's performance evaluations.

Larry stated the way in which employees are evaluated is very prescribed by bargaining units, and is not an IT function, but rather an HR function.

Issue 12:

An audience member asked Larry about his plans for IT for the next years.

Larry stated that he plans to continue to do things to solicit feedback from the campus (such as holding forums), there will be lots of work to implement the Strategic Plan, and a growing focus on the use IT to support teaching and learning.

Issue 13:

An audience member asked if cell phones will be incorporated into the student curriculum.

Larry stated that there are no current plans to use cell phones for curriculum purposes other than to enable the use of the Emergency Notification System (ENS).

Diego Bonilla stated that his department is looking into having students use cell phones as clickers to participate during classes.

Larry thanking the audience members for taking the time to attend and participate and the forum was adjourned.