

The National Higher Education Context for the Administrative Review of Information Technology

As the University of Maine information technology function entered the Administrative Review research and subsequent implementation, it joined a long list of higher education institutions which have undergone, or are planning to undergo, reviews of information technology spend and delivery.

Information technology is in a transformational period. The way services are delivered, the costs of those services, and the way decisions are made about the services offered are being evaluated. Over the last decade highly valued services such as email, the internet, data storage, servers, workstations, and productivity tools have become standardized, but our service, funding, delivery, and governing models remain much the same as they did a decade, or more, ago.

Complexity costs (stemming from applications proliferation or lack of hardware standards) are perhaps the most insidious IT cost driver, increasing total costs while simultaneously lowering overall quality and often choking out investments in new advanced technologies (e.g. business intelligence). Applications complexity drives the perception on many campuses that IT is an ever increasing resource drain with marginal ROI.¹

In order to meet the increasing demands for more technology to address the needs of the Academy, it is time to join many of our colleagues in higher education and evaluate the adjustments we must make to be leaner, more agile, and more highly skilled.

The Education Advisory Board's research, "Reinventing IT Services", identified a number of areas of focus in order to improve Information Technology service delivery. Among those identified are:

- Governance
- Duplication of services resulting from highly decentralized delivery and support
- Funding models
- Streamlining delivery and reducing complexity by aligning the application and project portfolios to information technology strategy which is aligned with a component of institution strategic plans

The list of institutions who have engaged in this effort to re-set information technology to support the 21st century institution is extensive. In its charge to its IT Administrative Restructuring WorkGroup, the University of Illinois System asked the group to undertake:

"a thoughtful focus on cost containment while maintaining or enhancing the level of administrative services," and it was suggested that the subcommittee consider such means as "better organization of

¹ University Business Executive Roundtable. 2011. *Reinventing IT Services: A Five-Year Road Map for the Function*. Education Advisory Board, Washington, DC. p. 16.

*service delivery functions, process improvements, elimination of duplicative services, better articulation of responsibilities of service units, and improving decision making.*²

At the University of Minnesota System, President Kaler's charge was to function as a single enterprise-to align, standardize, professionalize. He observed that the University of Minnesota System is too decentralized, has too much variation in services, and too much duplication of effort. He envisioned role clarity, development of service level agreements, standardized work processes and adoption of best practices, reduced costs.³

The following is a list of institutions which have engaged or are engaging in transformational efforts.

University of Michigan, NextGEN: Transforming from a highly decentralized IT delivery model to a new model which centralizes services such as Human Resources. Focus on rationalizing services (applications, data center, cloud and storage, network, managed desktop) and strengthening capabilities (project portfolio management, neighborhood IT support model, IT financial management). Established policy framework.⁴

University of Minnesota System: "From IT Silos to IT Alliance." Leadership transformation to develop relationships across IT in the system, and charged with a focus to align, standardize, and professionalize. President felt they were too decentralized, too much variation across the campuses on services, too much duplication of effort and expected them to reduce cost, create standards, service level agreements. Developed "Communities of Practice" approach, one example of a charge is "develop and evolve the relationships, roadmap, best practices and templates for consolidation of helpdesk and desktop support standards."⁵

Established a council of CIOs to work together to align IT across system.

University of Illinois System: Report recommends stronger degree of University wide coordination over IT. Recommends a lead CIO position over the system, also recommends establishment of formal governance, improvement of quality of IT cost reporting, assessment of IT funding, assessment of IT staffing, optimization of IT procurement, establishment of university system wide IT strategy.⁶

University of Miami, Ohio: Transformation initiated to manage budget pressures, IT environment unable to compete and innovate, overspend on commodity IT, fractured infrastructure. Focuses included rationalizing services (application and server virtualization), strengthening capabilities (project

² Administrative Review and Restructuring Information Technology Subcommittee Report. University of Illinois. 28 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.uillinois.edu/arr/documents/ARR-IT-Final-06-14-2010.pdf>>

³ Operational Excellence: Administrative Optimization and Dotted-Line Reporting. University of Minnesota. 14 Sep. 2012. 04 Dec. 2012. <<http://www1.umn.edu/president/speeches-and-writing/admin-optimization-and-dotted-line-reporting/>>

⁴ "NextGen Michigan." NextGen Michigan. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2012. <<http://www.nextgen.umich.edu/>>

⁵ Angelos, Peter, Brad Cohen, Jason Davis, and Brittany Lloyd. "Shared Leadership: From IT Silos to IT Alliance." EDUCAUSE Homepage/Annual Conference 2012. N.p., 2012. Web. 04 Dec. 2012. <<http://www.educause.edu/annual-conference/2012/shared-leadership-it-silos-it-alliance>>

⁶ "Huron IT Report, Administrative Review & Restructuring (ARR)." University of Illinois. N.p., 2 Feb. 2011. Web. 04 Dec. 2012. <<http://www.uillinois.edu/arr/implementation/index.cfm>>

portfolio management and portfolio governance, support model, enterprise architecture), consolidate administrative functions, data center management, relationship management, helpdesk and SDLC process improvements.⁷

Haverford and Bryn Mawr: Two institutions with a desire to reduce cost through collaboration rather than duplicate services. A number of initiatives are underway.

Olin, Babson, Wellesley: Same as Bryn Mawr and Haverford. Had already collaborated on non-IT functions and are now working on identity management (as a start) for collaboration and efficiency.

University of Wisconsin System: Has a Learning and IT office employing 10 members whose job it is to manage system-wide collaboration and development for system-wide IT planning, teaching and learning technology, development of major administrative systems, wide area networking, library automation and collections enhancement, research and development in emerging technologies.

CIOs from across Wisconsin belong to the council of CIOs⁸

University of Cincinnati: redesigned funding model to reflect 21st century technology and use of that technology.

British Columbia Institute of Technology: Developed enterprise architecture strategy that allowed them to evaluate solutions based on fit with the architecture and reduce costs by leveraging components of architecture they already have and support.⁹

Arizona State University: Management of IT professionals by IT both improving direct technical supervision and growth as well as increasing span of control for IT supervisors (increase number of direct reports—less fractionalized IT staff).¹⁰

University of Utah: Improved prioritization, governance, strategically based IT spend, project portfolio management to move away from first project up, first served.¹¹

⁷ University of Miami, Ohio. <<http://www.units.muohio.edu/uit/about-it/ssip-it>>

⁸ University of Wisconsin System. <<http://www.uwsa.edu/olit/cio/>>

⁹ University Business Executive Roundtable. 2011. Reinventing IT Services: A Five-Year Road Map for the Function. Education Advisory Board, Washington, DC. <<http://www.eab.com/Research-and-Insights/Business-Affairs-Forum/Studies/2011/Reinventing-IT-Services>>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ University of Utah. <http://www.acs.utah.edu/ppo/project_management.shtml>