

Towards a New CIO at the UW

A Report from the ITC

April 2006

Please forward comments or questions to Jake Blanchard, current ITC Chair

The Campus Information Technology Committee (ITC) is a committee of the faculty consisting of eight faculty members, three academic staff, three students, the CIO (ex officio), and five non-voting members. In this document we provide recommendations for restructuring of IT on campus. Our comments address the role of the CIO and the approach that should be taken in attracting quality candidates to the position.

This report was generated largely from a meeting of the ITC held on April 7. Neither the CIO nor any DoIT employees were present at this meeting, so these recommendations do not reflect their views.

Reporting

We feel that **the CIO should hold an Associate Vice Chancellor title and report to the Vice Chancellor for Administration**. When the CIO position was created, much of IT had an academic emphasis and it made sense to have the position report to the Provost. Since that time, the internet has made IT more of an infrastructure resource, leading to services that act like a utility or a business service. Hence, we feel that it makes more sense for the CIO to report to the Vice Chancellor for Administration. One exception is the Learning Technology group in DoIT, which clearly has an academic orientation. The campus might consider pulling LTDE out of DoIT and having that group report to the Provost.

Another key reason for having the CIO report to the Vice Chancellor for Administration is that the IT budgets on campus have grown rapidly and have a significant impact on campus funds. This is of particular concern as the demand for new administrative systems expands and their costs grow even faster. This budget issue is compounded by the difficulty outsiders have had understanding DoIT's budgets, resulting in unreliable strategic planning and, in some cases, a lack of restraint on their spending. Having the CIO report to the Vice Chancellor for Administration will help the campus resolve this problem.

We considered having the CIO report directly to the Chancellor, but felt the Chancellor focuses more on external issues and therefore it makes more sense to have the CIO report either to the Chief Academic Officer or the Chief Financial Officer.

Some on the committee felt that it was better to have the CIO continue to report to the Provost, but with improved coordination with the Vice Chancellor for Administration. In the end, the majority on the committee felt that a direct report to Administration was best.

Relationship to DoIT

The current CIO has taken a fairly active role in the day-to-day operations at DoIT. This is admirable, and may have been advisable given the status of DoIT upon her arrival. However, this approach detracts from the CIO's ability to take a more expansive view of Campus IT. We believe the next CIO should have a reduced role with regard to

operations at DoIT and an enhanced role with respect to IT units outside of DoIT. However, the CIO must have direct line authority for DoIT budgets and operations so that they can manage any changes which are to be made at DoIT and have an appropriate level of power for having an impact on campus level IT. Therefore, **we recommend that the CIO have a minimal responsibility for day-to-day operations at DoIT, but maintain direct line authority for it.** The precise structure of the CIO's relationship with DoIT can be developed after the new CIO arrives.

Relationship to Rest of Campus

The new CIO must take a more active role with respect to the needs and abilities of the IT units outside of DoIT. This will be a challenge, as there will be no direct line authority. In addition, there are existing attitudes towards DoIT that the CIO will have to overcome to get the needed cooperation for progress to be made. However, there are substantial benefits to this activity, such as reduced duplication and enhanced services due to combining expertise from a wide cross section of campus. Hence, **the PVL for the new CIO should emphasize the need for a broad, campus-wide role for the CIO.** This role goes beyond working with campus-wide IT units. The CIO needs to be connected, at some level, to all faculty and staff on campus, with the goal of supporting us in using information technology to enhance the teaching, research and service missions of the university.

Relationship to the Library

DoIT currently has a very good working relationship with the campus library system. In addition, DoIT is arguably already too large and has difficulty functioning efficiently. Therefore, **there is no need to alter the relationship between DoIT and the Library.**

Administrative Computing

There continues to be major problems with a number of administrative computing projects on campus and the trend seems to be towards increased costs and reduced capability. The new CIO must take this on. **We should make it clear that the new CIO will be expected to have a leadership role in implementing new administrative systems on campus, as well as in managing existing projects.**

Governance

The Campus IT governance structure does not need modification. The new CIO will need to understand our governance structure and develop an appropriate working relationship with the ITC. The CIO should understand that the committee provides oversight, but also opportunities for representational input from various campus communities that can be valuable in operational and budgetary planning. As an example, the ITC could function more as a "hands-on" group, such as MTAG. The ITC should continue to have budget oversight for DoIT and the CIO must find a way to make this task function better by exposing the budget in a more transparent fashion. **The new CIO must come to campus with a clear understanding that our governance structure is unique and that the CIO office will be accountable to our existing structure.**

Budget Models and Planning

We believe that DoIT does not have adequate funding for supporting the core IT services needed by a campus such as ours. This lack of central funding requires DoIT to charge back for most of their services and leads, in some cases, to a rather poor working relationship with other campus units. In fact, there is ample anecdotal evidence that it is becoming common for departments and other units to seek off-campus resources for IT projects. **The new CIO must work with the rest of campus to identify a set of core services which will be provided free of charge to all units.** This will require a source of funds beyond what is currently available, but it will provide savings to units currently going to DoIT for “charge-back” services.

In addition, the “shadow budget” system set in place at DoIT before the arrival of the current CIO has met with limited success. This system is a key reason why it is difficult for outsiders to understand DoIT’s budgets and it also seems to have led to inefficiencies within DoIT. It will be difficult to replace the shadow system, due to the degree to which it affects every aspect of DoIT operations, but it may be worth the effort. Hence, **the new CIO should begin the process of reviewing the shadow budget process and considering alternatives.** This would necessitate development of other mechanisms for setting IT priorities.