Information Technology Master Plan Task Force
Report of the Academic Subgroup

Subgroup Members: Kevin McIntyre (Psychology, Co-chair), Farzan Aminian (Engineering Science), Brian Bondari (Music), Jorge Colazo (School of Business), Sean Connin (Collaborative for Learning and Teaching), Jeremy Donald (Library), Matthew Hibbs (Computer Science), Gregory Longoria (Center for Learning and Technology), Corina Maeder (Chemistry), Troy Murphy (Biology), Michael Soto (English)

Overview

This task force was charged with developing an Information Technology (IT) master plan that would “propose action steps, policies, and structures to align personnel and services to meet the goals of the Trinity Tomorrow strategic plan.” The charge of the Academic Subgroup was to consider the role of technology as it relates to teaching, research, and learning. To inform our proposal, we sought information from our Trinity colleagues regarding the strengths and weaknesses of our current approach to technology, we investigated peer institutions, and we had extensive discussions during subgroup meetings. Below, we propose three strategic initiatives that address the needs we identified as a result of this investigation.

Strategic Initiative 1: Establish a robust IT governance structure.

Rationale: The Trinity Tomorrow Strategic Plan recognizes the central role of information technology in higher education today. For example, Strategic Foundation B proposes that Trinity seek to “Be an Innovative Leader for Excellence in Teaching and Research” and emphasizes the role of technology to help meet this goal.

However, as identified by our subcommittee and the IT Governance Audit (see appendix), Trinity currently lacks a formal process to review and evaluate technology-related initiatives. We suggest that the lack of a formal process can lead to several undesirable consequences:

- Limited transparency in decision making
- Key stakeholders (e.g., faculty, IT, ITS) left out of decision making process
- Lack of clear communication and responsibility for instructional technology support
- Potential for misalignment between decisions and university objectives
- Investment in technology that is unlikely to be adopted in the classroom
- Reduced satisfaction among constituencies
We therefore propose the creation of an **Information Technology Governance Committee**, as well as a **formal evaluation process** for new technology-related initiatives.

The purpose of the IT Governance Committee is to set technology-related policies, evaluate proposed investments (and forward recommendations to the Vice President for Information Resources), and monitor the implementation of programs. The committee would receive information related to proposals from working groups, including a Faculty and Academic Staff working group dedicated to proposal management and faculty/staff interests. The Faculty and Academic Staff working group would examine the academic implications of new technology proposals and make recommendations to the IT Governance Committee regarding which proposals should be supported.

In addition, we propose that new technology initiatives, especially those that could have an impact on teaching and learning across academic disciplines, go through a formal evaluation process. To facilitate the evaluation process, we suggest the creation of an online proposal submission portal. The goal of this portal would be to standardize the information that goes into a proposal (e.g., rationale, budget, facilities implications, departmental support, etc.), as well as the criteria used to evaluate projects (i.e., creation of a proposal “scorecard”). We believe that this will ultimately increase the transparency of the evaluation process, because faculty and academic staff will have a clear procedure to follow to propose ideas, as well as a clear understanding of the criteria that will go into the evaluation of proposals. In addition, we suggest that meeting minutes of the governance committee be publically available, so that all interested individuals can know about the various proposals being considered by the committee.

**Strategic Initiative 2: Support technology-related innovation in teaching, research, and learning**

**Rationale:** Technology is transforming education in much the same way that it is transforming other industries. In order for Trinity University to provide a state of the art education, it is critical that faculty and academic staff have the ability to incorporate new technology into their pedagogy. At the same time, course redesign is a time-consuming and intensive process; it is difficult enough for faculty to design courses that cover the content of an academic discipline, let alone for faculty to keep abreast of technology-related advances in teaching and learning.

We therefore propose a process of review and planning that promotes **Innovative Technologies in Teaching and Learning**. We suggest that this review be led by the Center for Learning and Technology and Collaborative for Learning and Teaching, as well as members of the Governance committee. We believe that a review of existing resources would help identify technologies that are already available but underutilized, as well as assess how to better allocate, (re)structure, and describe the resources that we have (funds, staff, space), to thereby effectively support the intentional use of technology in relation to instruction and student learning.
One reason that faculty and academic staff may not innovate in the classroom is that they aren’t aware of the new technologies that they may want to adopt. Possible ways to remedy this include establishing a speaker series devoted to innovative academic technologies, holding workshops on best practices, and sending interested faculty and academic staff to conferences.

Another way to encourage innovation and the implementation of new technologies is to put them on display. Thus, we propose the creation of an “experimental classroom.” This classroom would be a space where new teaching-related technologies could be tested and evaluated by faculty, staff, and students, prior to their widespread adoption. For example, prior to the renovation of academic buildings, faculty could try out new technologies to determine whether they should be incorporated into redesigned classrooms. In addition, the experimental classroom would embody Trinity’s commitment to innovative teaching and learning, and therefore convey this commitment to prospective students and outside groups. We suggest that the experimental classroom be an appealing, modern space that will be impressive to prospective students and their families.

Once faculty and academic staff are aware of innovations, we can encourage the adoption of new technologies by establishing a course redesign grant. As identified in the IT Governance audit, technology is typically viewed as a utility or resource, rather than as a way to improve teaching and research. Having a grant program would encourage faculty and academic staff to consider how new technologies might add value to their teaching and research, as well as provide the resources necessary for the adoption of new technologies.

**Strategic Initiative 3: Enhance the effectiveness of technology through training**

Rationale: Technology can only transform teaching and learning when people know how to use it effectively. Currently, Trinity invests in technologies that are underutilized due to lack of awareness that certain technologies are available, and due to the lack of knowledge regarding how to use these technologies.

We therefore propose a greater emphasis on, and coordination for, Academic Technology Training programming that is frequent, meaningful, intentional, and well-communicated to faculty and academic staff. Such programming could include, for example, effective use of learning spaces, academic technologies, communication technologies, and conceptual innovations in technology, with the overall goal of providing a more systematic, unified, and sustainable process for providing these training services.

We believe that we can leverage current resources, such as the Collaborative for Learning and Teaching and Center for Learning and Technology to increase awareness and usage of technologies related to teaching and learning, particularly for new faculty. In addition, as new
technologies are purchased, this training program would help ensure that they are actually adopted for classroom use.

**What does success look like?**

**Indicators of Success for Strategic Initiative 1:** Establish a robust Information Technology (IT) governance structure.

1. Creation of an Information Technology Governance Committee. Once the committee has been established, creation of documents for the proposal review process (e.g., proposal form, scorecard).
2. Submission of proposals to the committee.
3. Increased perception of transparency in the decision making process.
4. Increased communication among university stakeholders.
5. Increased alignment between technology-related decisions and university priorities.

**Indicators of Success for Strategic Initiative 2:** Support technology-related innovation in teaching and learning

1. Increased awareness of academic technologies.
2. Improved return on technological investments.
3. Faculty, academic staff, and students use the experimental classroom to explore and evaluate new technologies.
4. Prospective students tour the experimental classroom.
5. Faculty and academic staff apply for course redesign grants.

**Indicators of Success for Strategic Initiative 3:** Enhance the effectiveness of technology through training

1. Faculty and academic staff perceive greater self-efficacy with respect to technology.
2. Faculty and academic staff report greater satisfaction with their use of technology.
3. Increased usage rates of previously purchased technology.
4. Increased effectiveness of technology use in the classroom.
5. Improved scores on IT satisfaction surveys.