



APPENDIX A

Situation Audit – Technology Services, February through August 2005

An Executive Summary of Interviews with Deans, Academic Vice Presidents, Administrative Vice Presidents/Directors and other users re: Technology Services strategic plan

This report summarizes 26 meetings conducted from February through August 2005 with the deans, the director of Tulane's Primate Center, academic vice presidents, key technology users, student leaders, and administrative/operations vice presidents and directors. The meetings were held individually, and in some cases included not only the head of the unit, but staff members as well. A complete listing of all meeting participants is attached. The meetings were conducted by Rhonda Coignet, Executive Director of Strategic Planning, Adam Krob, Director of End User Support Services, and Linda Orth Wright, Director of Instructional Technology

Overall, the academic and administrative users interviewed have mixed feelings toward information technology at Tulane. On the one hand, while most seem to appreciate the inherent difficulties in providing technology to such a large and diverse community of users, they are frustrated by the lack of a coherent strategy for providing technology that meets their particular needs. In general, they appreciate the level of technical support provided, but want a more proactive approach to solving IT problems rather than the current reactive approach. Users appreciate that IT is expensive, but feel they are not getting value for their limited IT dollars, particularly in the context of Tulane's allocated costs financial model. The attached meeting summaries include a number of areas of concern among the users interviewed. The most frequently mentioned areas are listed below, in no particular order after Communication.

A consistently mentioned area of concern and frustration was **Communication**, or the lack thereof, between technology services and the user community. The communication breakdown exists on many levels, from end users not knowing what services are available to the community, to key technology support staff within the individual schools and colleges being unaware of plans for major changes and upgrades to the network infrastructure, and everywhere in between. The users interviewed consistently noted the lack of a forum for discussing technology needs on the business/administrative side of the house, and the lack of a system for prioritizing projects and determining how administrative or academic technology priorities will be met. IT decisions are made in isolation, without input from the community or user involvement. As a result, users feel the only option they have to meet their IT needs is to implement their own shadow systems, which ultimately drains staffing and financial resources, and duplicates efforts. Individual colleges, schools, and departments have taken the initiative to implement their own systems, depriving Technology Services of valuable opportunities to assist in the planning, implementation, and ultimate support of the systems.

The **Student Information System** is a particular source of constant worry and frustration. Some deans feel they were not consulted in the selection, planning, or implementation of the new Matrix system. As a result, they believe the new system will meet only the needs of the registrar. No information has been released regarding the new system's capabilities, and end-user concerns and needs have not been taken into account in designing the system. The constantly shifting implementation date is of much concern, particularly in those areas where day-to-day functionality will be directly affected by continued delays.

The deans are concerned that Tulane's technology is falling short of **student expectations, particularly in the limited use of instructional technology by faculty as well as the shortage of technology-enabled classrooms across the university.** These concerns range from the high-tech needs of the School of Medicine, where electronic student and faculty evaluations are becoming the norm in medical education, to the needs of the School of Social Work for electronic classroom capabilities at the most basic levels. The deans noted that students continually express their preference for utilizing the Blackboard course management system, while faculty make limited use of instructional technology beyond transparencies, and PowerPoint, and under-utilize the services of the ILC. Architecture noted that students are leaving Tulane because technology does not meet their needs or expectations, while the Business School observed that their students are mainly satisfied with the technology resources available in the Freeman School. One dean observed more faculty are being hired with higher levels of computer needs and expectations, and Tulane's information technology will have to accommodate those increased levels if the university wants to continue to attract competitive faculty. Tulane will also have to adjust traditional pedagogical approaches to meet the needs of today's more technologically savvy student.

TU website and email/webmail systems were also mentioned as problem areas. Although maintenance of the website does not fall under Technology Services' purview, the perception is that TS is responsible for its failings and shortcomings. Specifically, the website was described as outdated, not user-friendly, hard to navigate, and non-responsive to the needs of our students. A number of deans are frustrated that they are forced to hire outside consultants to design and maintain their individual websites, a service they believe they are paying for through the allocated costs model. On the other hand, TS is responsible for the university's email system, which was most frequently described during the interviews as unreliable, slow, and unresponsive.

Staffing resources are another area of concern, in as much as IT staffing levels seem very thin compared with the workload and as compared to peer institutions. The deans and department heads recognize this problem and have filled the void by hiring their own technology staff. The tacit message is that deans and department heads do not perceive that Technology Services is taking initiative to fulfill their needs, in part or in whole.

General Perceptions: What's Working

The users interviewed also had good things to say about information technology at Tulane. Many of those interviewed, though not all, noted that **technical support** is responsive, if somewhat reactive, to user-reported problems. The availability of staff **training** on basic office systems such as the MS Office Suite is adequate, though a few deans wished their staff would take advantage of the Center for Workforce Effectiveness.

Wish-List

A number of those interviewed expressed a need for standardized **Central IT policies and procedures**, especially regarding security, email addresses, backup procedures, etc. While a few observed that moving to **one platform and one computer vendor** (e.g., Dell PCs), would create economies of scale across the university, they also acknowledged the resistance such a policy would provoke.

Overwhelmingly, however, what those interviewed most frequently said they wanted is to be **included in IT decisions** that directly affect the functioning of their particular operating unit. Whether it is the design of the new electronic payroll action form, new policies regarding access to secure information about students or alumni, the relocation of computer labs used heavily by a particular group of students, or just being informed of changes to the network or in IT policies, communication and collaboration were the two common threads running throughout all 26 meetings. These key stakeholders feel that they are not included in decisions, reflected in both action (new systems, new policies) and inaction (unmet needs) that affect their units. The decentralized budget structure of the university underscores and empowers these key stakeholders to act independently of Technology Services. These actions can either be unilateral

or cooperative. Engaging the stakeholders in on-going dialogue and a well-conceived project intake and management process is critical to increasing levels of satisfaction.