Key Questions for Faculty

IT Strategic Plan for the next 3-5 years
from Dr. Jerry DeSanto, VP for Planning and CIO

The responses here was compiled by the Technology Advisory Group. The items listed are things that members of TAG, through their direct experiences or conversations, feel are appropriate responses. In another document, we will compile responses from the faculty at-large. I have left in the *italicized* comments directed towards the contributors, so that the reader may see the context under which TAG members responded. We would like to thank IT and Jerry DeSanto for reaching out to both TAG and the faculty for input into these concerns.

Note to Contributers: This document is being designed to answer a number of Key Questions that Jerry DeSanto submitted to the Deans in order to help craft the next IT Strategic Plan. This document is a broad ranging document which outline the priorities and scope of projects to be undertaken, as well as informs certain large-scale budgetary decisions. The Strategic Plan is not a document where specific requests or individual needs can be incorporated. Thus, for an effective use of our feedback, responses below should be programmatic, general, and forward-thinking. Feel free to include specifics during the draft stages in order to compile general consensus, but we should try to limit such statements in the final version of the document.

- How can IT better support faculty research?
  Are there resources that faculty need for research that are not being met? What communication, connectivity, electronic, or computational resources are under-served by the present IT infrastructure?

  At present, faculty research infrastructure seems to support faculty needs and goals. Given the existence of Internet 2 and a relatively fast intranet, much of the data and connectivity, campus-wide, meets the current needs. TAG receives significantly fewer research-related complaints than teaching-related complaints.

  That being said, most computational and IT resources that are needed by faculty for their research seem to be maintained locally, possibly with little management/oversight from IT. In some cases, this is the desired relationship, but in others faculty may benefit from IT Services. It may be beneficial for IT to collaborate with the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects to catalogue the research done by faculty and see if any non-intrusive centralization can be accomplished.

  Specifically, one area where centralization can be beneficial is the recording of subject/client interviews. Faculty need the ability to securely record audio and video conversations, both in person and remotely. It would be inefficient for each faculty member to maintain their own recording devices, and a centralized facility would be valuable. One possible tool, which we will return to in regards to the changing classroom environment, is a WIMBA classroom (http://www.wimba.com/solutions/higher-

education/wimba_classroom_for_higher_education/; for a video demo of these WIMBA classrooms, see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPUVurDaWAE&feature=related)

- What new technology needs/support is anticipated for our evolving faculty?
  New faculty bring new ideas, methodologies, and techniques. Are there things that all our faculty would like to bring into their classroom, office, or campus life that would add to the university experience?

  More and more, learning is becoming online and mobile. The current online learning platform lacks versatility and ease-of-use. A committee was constructed last year to evaluate a new Learning Management System (LMS). The conclusion of that committee was to keep the current LMS (Angel) for the next few academic years, but to re-evaluate the platform in the near future. It is the expectation of TAG that a different LMS will be implemented during the duration of this Tactical Plan. Thus, TAG encourages IT to look into and be prepared to smooth this transition.

  Additionally, as online learning and distance education grow in popularity, a versatile platform that allows faculty to present educational content in this medium would be needed.

- How is the classroom experience changing in the next several years, and how can IT facilitate its evolution?
  This is the big and difficult question. There are many things that can be brought into the classroom, but many of these technologies peak early and fade fast. A strategic plan should consider the options, and request broad strategies, not specific products. For example, advocating campus-wide lecture capture technologies, but agnostic about the specific product and software.

  The classroom **can** evolve as quickly as technology can evolve. But it **will** only evolve as fast as instructors adopt that technology, regardless of what technology exists in the classroom. Instructors are hesitant to jump into new, unproven technologies for fear that they will stop working mid-semester. Incorporating new and unique pedagogical methods leveraging available technology is often challenging, but, oftentimes, the real effort involves getting the buy-in from the **students**. We need the students to be engaged in the classroom and engaged with the methodology. If things break during the semester, the faculty are usually flexible enough change teaching methods, but we have now lost that buy-in from the students that we worked so hard to obtain. Furthermore, the student body has an "institutional history" as well, which means, when instructors try to implement the same strategy again, it gets even harder to get that buy-in the next time. I write this preface to this section with a very specific purpose: it is, perhaps, better to incorporate proven technologies that are guaranteed to work, devoting the resources necessary to them, than to execute broader implementation with less likelihood of guaranteed success.

In terms of teaching technology, "Bring Your Own Device" (BYOD) is commonplace for students. From cell phones to laptops to tablets, students are more and more bringing, and expecting to use, their own tools in the context of the learning environment. Cell phones are getting smarter, and mobile access to learning more prevalent. Special apps that function as clickers or allow a full-featured access to the LMS would be useful.

Some other barriers that need to be crossed include electronic versions of textbooks (are open book tests now impossible?), online testing (securely locking down certain resources), and plagiarism detection.

But with new technology comes a need to facilities to support that technology. Most classroom on campus, as well as many of the study areas, are ill equipped for mobile student access. The Wifi coverage is often excellent, but the availability of charging stations and power outlets is detrimental to such use. The new classrooms in LSC have internet and power outlets right on the desk, which is a useful tool. The future classroom may need such conveniences available to the student during classtime. The future public space may need charging stations (similar to those in airport terminals) to facilitate modern mobile student learning.

The Panuska College of Professional Studies (PCPS) often has a need for recording and reviewing both audio and video. These can come in the form of professional research, course work, or service programs. Sometimes even a combination of them all. Educationally, these recordings provide a very important tool for preparing our students. The overlap between a research need (mentioned above) and the educational/ classroom need is significant. TAG is aware that the pilot program for the lecture capture software is a step in the correct direction, but care needs to be taken to make sure that both the hardware and software are implemented in such as way as to serve all the faculty needs.

One potential area that can be explored which can combine all the above comments, as well as provide an excellent pedagogical test bed for faculty, is something similar to a WIMBA classroom (http://www.wimba.com/solutions/higher-education/ wimba_classroom_for_higher_education/). These "smart classrooms" can contain the newer and experimental technologies and reserved by faculty with legitimate needs. Building one would require a guaranteed commitment from multiple places across the university, including the faculty, the administration, and IT. While they would be a large initial expense, they could provide a large number of benefits. They can provide a testbed, which includes all the necessary infrastructure, for new technologies as they arise. A single location will encourage integration with existing resources, limiting the overlap and duplication of infrastructure. Individual faculty can be encouraged to try out new pedagogical methods in a setting with diverse and robust facilities. Usage statistics can provide information on things like ethernet jacks, wifi access, and power usage by students and faculty.

- Are there any new academic programs being developed which would need additional IT support?

  TAG is not as suited to provide information on programmatic changes, as that is more the purview of the Deans and the Chairs. However, we are aware of a few areas where development may be necessary.

  PCPS is exploring potential graduate programs, including doctoral and/or rehab programs. Some components (possible all of them) may be hosted online.

  Additionally, the university is beginning implementation of a passport program, and individual departments may be exploring passport-type programs specific to their majors. The tracking of student progress would be best centralized through some IT infrastructure.

- The President has stated intentions toward a globalized University; how do faculty expect this to impact web-based education, study abroad, and the potential for satellite campuses?
  Do we have faculty involved or interested in these programs that know what might be needed? How would the implementation of such programs impact current programs?

  There are a number of faculty, particularly in nursing, who are interested in partnering with universities across the globe. These interactions could be as simple as video conferencing or as complex as shared virtual classrooms (another WIMBA use). This could also be used in conjunction with our partner universities in China for any range of events.