

## 6. Coordinating and Rationalizing Service Delivery

The coordination and rationalization of ICT services across the University requires

- clarification of the responsibilities between ICT service providers within the University's federated model, and
- articulation of the institutional priorities for ICT investments and services.

This will require the participation and active engagement of senior administration and the leadership of a wide spectrum of academic and administrative units. Both of these tasks can be managed by the same assembly of leaders of academic and administrative units.

### Clarification of Responsibilities between ICT Service Providers

The effective application of ICT is critical to achievement of the goals outlined in the Strategic Directions and as a result the University is becoming increasingly dependent upon ICT. Despite substantial investments over the past year,<sup>69</sup> further investments are still necessary. These investments will need to occur in colleges and administrative units as well as centrally.

The University has adopted a federated support model. Under a federated support model, the responsibilities for ICT are shared between colleges and administrative units, and the central ICT organization. A federated support model specifies guidelines for determining the services that should be provided in a distributed manner, the services that should be provided centrally, and the shared responsibilities for ICT (see section 2.2).

However, our adoption of the federated support model was not based on the formal application of these principles. Like many other higher education institutions, the University's ICT environment has evolved into a complex, interrelated, and in some cases, duplicated mesh of services that are delivered by ITS, colleges and administrative units.<sup>70</sup> Most colleges and administrative units maintain their own ICT staff and services. In essence, this results in having 15 or more ICT organizations on campus. The degree to which colleges' and administrative units' ICT services are coordinated with ITS' services or among each other varies, but often is generally low.

The ICT foundational document recognizes that "the lines of responsibility and authority (within our implementation of the federated model) aren't as clear as they need to be." The integrated planning process further challenges us to review how ICT services are delivered.

The ICT service delivery matrix needs to be examined with the goals of

- Increasing efficiency
- Clarifying things for users
- Removing competition between units

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<sup>69</sup> Some of these investments are outlined on page 25 of the ICT foundational document.

<sup>70</sup> Including the Library, Division of Media and Technology, Facilities Management Division, Financial Services Division, Consumer Services, Extension, Teaching and Learning Centre, Student Enrolment and Services Division, University Advancement, Institutional Analysis

- Removing unnecessary duplication of services
- Permitting each unit to focus on services at which they can succeed and which will be appreciated by the institution

This will require a review of ICT services on campus by a broadly based group with a mandate to recommend change where it may be needed.

The review would determine the responsibilities of colleges administrative units and ITS for various services. In the case of duplicated services, the review should determine whether the duplication is necessary. The federated model recognizes that some ICT skills (services) should be delivered (duplicated) in colleges and administrative units. The focus of those services should be to address the specific (local) needs of a college or administrative unit. However, services that are offered by multiple units (duplicated) to the campus community create internal competition and confusion for users; in general, these duplicated services should be eliminated.

The review should also consider cost-effectiveness of service delivery. In general, the University cannot afford to duplicate competency centres for highly complex skills that are expensive to develop and maintain.

While further clarification of specific responsibilities for ICT services is required, the responsibilities for some services, including the ones below, have been clarified, with a resulting improvement in service.

- Campus-wide printing (for students)
- E-payments infrastructure
- E-mail, file services and web services for students
- E-mail services for alumni
- Discipline specific computer facilities and support

The following services are provided by several organizations on campus. Clarification regarding the central and unit responsibilities for these services is still required.

- E-mail for instructors, researchers and staff
- Instructional technology and course management systems
- Help desk services
- ICT training
- File services for instructors, researchers and staff
- Web page hosting for instructors, researchers and staff
- Desktop support services
- Software license management
- Application and database design and development
- E-calendaring services

While more clarification of the responsibilities for ICT service delivery under the federated model is recommended, we are not recommending that all ICT services should be centralized. **Some ICT services should be provided locally by in colleges and administrative units.**

It should also be noted that a **re-alignment of responsibilities likely will not result in significant cost savings to the University**. The University of Saskatchewan spends less on ICT than other comparable universities; any cost savings will be insignificant. Even if cost savings are identified, they may be impossible to capture.

Nevertheless, the clarification of service delivery responsibilities in the federated model should continue. It would clarify service responsibilities for service providers, make it simpler for users to acquire services, help identify the true cost of computing across campus, and help define the budget required to adequately deliver campus services. In summary, it would “ensure that we have the right allocation of authority, responsibility and budget.”<sup>71</sup>

A formalized federated support model will require a culture that supports effective, broad cooperation and collaboration. This collaboration would have to include setting ICT priorities with the ultimate goal of developing an integrated ICT plan.

### **Setting Institutional Priorities for ICT Investments and Services**

ICT expenditures will increase because colleges and administrative units want and need ICT to deliver more functionality and more service (including for recruitment, retention, increased research, scholarly and artistic work, or whatever). Recent examples include the Si!, UniFi and portal projects.

Given this increasing demand and limited funding, the choices for investment (and disinvestment) in ICT need to be made collectively by the leaders of the academic and business units in order to maximize the benefits of those investments for our institution. ICT investment decisions are business (academic and administrative) decisions; they are not ICT decisions. Of course, ICT has a role to play in providing investment advice regarding costs, interoperability, technology directions, etc.

At this University, the task of setting ICT priorities may fall upon the Campus Advisory Board for Information Systems (perhaps with the addition of some members). Successful ICT decision-making models are being used at other universities (e.g. University of Alberta, Northeastern<sup>72</sup>). At those universities, the advisory group establishes the metrics and weightings with which to compare the value to the institution (return on investment) among proposed investments in ICT projects (e.g. network connections in the residences and in a research grant accounting system). It also develops metrics for evaluating risks and costs to the institution.

The discussion of ICT investments in such a forum has additional benefits of the following.

- A better partnership relationship between the business units and the ICT units based on a common view of the projects and full collaboration during the formative stages of the project definition and plan
- Creation of a common IT lexicon for everyone involved
- Increased understanding of the problems and imperatives in other academic and administrative units

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<sup>71</sup> ICT Foundational Document, June 2003

<sup>72</sup> *IT Investments Decisions that Defy Arithmetic*, EDUCAUSE Quarterly, 1, 2004

- Alerts to units regarding planned changes that could affect their own processes
- The costs of process change and cultural change
- Completely costed proposals to enable informed decision making

The University has an opportunity to use ICT to help it progress towards the goals stated in the Strategic Directions and the foundational documents.

- We must make investments in ICT that contribute the “most” towards the goals stated in the Strategic Directions and foundational documents.
- We must collectively develop a better understanding of the opportunities presented to us by ICT.

We must develop better benchmarks to measure contribution of ICT (and other) investments towards our strategic goals.