

**Peer Team Report
On
Information Technology Services**

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Information Technology Services Program Review Peer Team Report

Section I. Service Area Description

Information Technology Services (ITS) is a resource for the research, acquisition, implementation, and maintenance of information technology on campus. This mission has been mandated by the Administration of the College in order to support the information technology needs of the campus community.

The ITS self-study states: “The ITS Mission is to provide a stable information technology (IT) infrastructure and protect the accessibility, integrity and availability of the district’s IT resources for our students, employees, alumni and community members. We apply our technical competence toward effective management and efficient utilization of these resources, while exploring and appropriately developing emerging technologies to meet the challenges of the district’s changing instructional and operational IT needs.”

Section II. Self-Evaluation

A. Employees

There is not an adequate number of employees in ITS to serve all the needs of the institution. The current staff has been stretched very thin, and the current loss and/or freezing of positions has increased the workload of the existing staff. The ITS area organizational chart (Figure 1 in the ITS Program Review Report) shows all the positions that should exist in ITS. Several are not filled, or not filled with full-time staff. With the growth that AVC has been experiencing these positions cannot remain unfilled or there will not be enough staff to meet the needs of the college.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Fill the Academic and Services Support Manager position
- Fill the ITS help desk by hiring at least two full time staff. These staff members should be a priority if the institution wishes to meet the needs of the faculty, staff and students of AVC.
- Fill vacant ITS full-time positions

B. Customer Relations

ITS employees feel there is no clear directive from administration which defines the relationship of ITS to those campus constituencies it seeks to serve. Support of this kind from administration has been weak at best, creating unnecessary confusion between ITS and faculty/staff.

IT staff believe that their role on this campus as technology experts is not clear to other campus groups. If new technology is to be implemented, communication with ITS must take place at the very beginning of the planning process not at the end. It can be very difficult for the department to provide support for such technology after it has been purchased and/or installed. Subsequent questions from ITS about new, department-owned technology are often regarded as intrusive, and can result in strained relations between ITS and those it serves. Significant dialog and cooperation at the beginning of the technology selection process can help avoid these issues.

Discussions of this kind have taken place successfully in some areas of campus and there is every reason to believe that productive discussions could take place on a larger scale.

Communication appears to be a major issue with certain constituencies on campus, as well as within ITS. There appears to be a serious disconnect between ITS and some areas, suggesting the need for more communication between these groups. Relations between some constituent groups and ITS have deteriorated to the point that virtually no communication or cooperation is currently possible. Each department feels an ownership over technology software and equipment and that makes it difficult for ITS to do its job effectively.

Findings indicate that ITS staff frequently found themselves at odds with the Instructional Media Center. Interviews indicated that the situation has developed into an “us vs. them” mentality, resulting in little to no communication between IMC and ITS even at the most basic level. Some interviewees felt that there was significant animosity on the part of the IMC towards ITS. Others suggested that there should be greater cooperation between ITS and the IMC. Some ITS staff feel that the IMC is implementing technology that is at odds with existing campus technology supported by ITS. Interviewees also felt that the IMC should focus on “front end” development of technology, while leaving the “back end” to ITS. Interviewees were concerned that the IMC staff do not have the expertise required to make various types of technology work together, and that their efforts to use their own technology result in compatibility problems. Findings indicate a need for communication with the IMC and a willingness on the part of ITS staff to work in collaboration with the IMC. Some ITS staff were also of the opinion that anyone who works with instructional technology equipment should report to ITS. Electronic equipment in classrooms is serviced by both ITS and the IMC, depending on the nature of the equipment. Confusion occurs when instructors do not know whom to contact when problems occur with technology in the classroom.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- In concert with other campus constituencies, develop and implement a standard process for the selection, evaluation, purchase, and implementation of information technology.
- Ensure campus groups are familiar with the process for acquiring information technology.
- Administration must support the mandate it has given to ITS by communicating that mandate to the campus community.
- Establish lines of communication with the Instructional Media Center and work in concert with that department on the development and implementation of appropriate technology.

C. Quality of Service:

The expectation of 24/7 customer support is impossible with the current level of staffing. IT employees indicated the need for the campus to realize the limitations imposed on ITS due to the lack of staff, and adopt reasonable expectations about what services ITS can and cannot support. Findings indicate that the campus community does not have accurate information about why ITS cannot offer all the services they need.

The ITS self study reports that faculty have higher expectations from ITS than do other campus groups. However there is no data in the report to support this assertion. The report offers data on levels of satisfaction, but no data on levels of expectation. A survey targeting faculty and staff expectations would provide valuable data in this area.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Communicate limitations of ITS to campus constituencies.
- Conduct a survey to determine what faculty and staff expect from the department.

D. Institutional Support:

Facilities: ITS staff are currently using offices in several different locations on campus. This decentralized arrangement makes communication between ITS employees difficult.

Equipment and other resources: Findings indicate that a move toward blade technology would be advantageous. Blade technology is cooler, more cost effective in the long run, and is a “green” technology. The use of individual

servers is becoming outdated and will be more costly in the long run. Findings also indicate that an FTP site (server?) is needed for alternative media.

Budget: ITS is seriously under-funded. As shown on page 16 of the Self-Study, the ITS budget has decreased every year since 2001. Meanwhile the cost of technology (software, hardware, licenses, etc.) has continued to increase exponentially. Findings indicate that much of the technology infrastructure serving the campus is aging rapidly. Due to insufficient funding, hardware and software are being replaced on an emergency basis using whatever funding sources are available at the time. Funds to implement an equipment replacement plan would avoid emergency purchases and allow ITS to upgrade old technology in a systematic, cost effective manner. ITS also has no budget for the department that allows the purchase of office supplies, furniture, or office technology. The ITS operating budget is currently used to purchase computers, servers, software licenses, etc. campus wide, as well as anything needed for departmental operations.

Technical Support: ITS staff attend training classes, often at their own cost. Still, many do not have the necessary skills required and requested by the institutional areas. Funding has also not been available for training opportunities when they occur.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Recognize that the adoption of technology in various service areas requires a significant commitment to ongoing funding, and that the cost of technology will continue to rise.
- Upgrade software as support for older software ends.
- Develop a hardware replacement schedule if one does not already exist.
- Provide adequate funding for new and replacement technology.
- Make funding for information technology a priority.
- Technology requests should be evaluated jointly by ITS and the requestor to determine the best product for any particular need.
- Define the ITS budget and separate it from those monies which are to be used for campus-wide requirements.

E. Service Area Specific Standards:

ITS has been given what amounts to an “under-funded mandate”. It must provide services appropriate to the needs of campus groups, but has not been given the funding or staff to do so in an appropriate manner. This has only led to confusion and ill feelings between ITS and campus groups. Technology is expensive, and the declining ITS budget indicates a serious lack of support from the College administration. Without proper funding and staff, the current situation will not improve.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Articulate the mandate given to ITS in a manner that is understandable and available to all campus constituencies.
- Fund ITS adequately to enable the department to achieve its mandate.