Have you given any thought lately to sharing a campus experience with your colleagues by contributing an article to CAUSE/EFFECT? If so, you’ll appreciate the list of emerging and ongoing issues offered by the CAUSE Current Issues Committee (page 5) to stimulate not only C/E articles, but also online discussions, professional paper proposals, and suggestions for actions or programs you would like to see CAUSE undertake.

Of the myriad issues suggested, two in particular relate to several articles in this issue: (1) the challenge to central organizations to effectively support increasing numbers of faculty, staff, and students using distributed systems and services, and (2) the impacts and challenges of the networked information environment.

**Time to rethink the organization—again!**

Common solutions to distributed computing support challenges in recent years have ranged from dramatic, total restructuring of the IT organization, to creating new programs to facilitate and improve communication and coordination with campus departments, to employing new management techniques within existing units.

Look no further than the University of Wisconsin—Madison’s Division of Information Technology (DoIT) for an example of a totally restructured organization. What is unique about UW’s approach is their consultation with N. Dean Meyer and adaptation of his structural cybernetics theory to their effort. The UW article blends a discussion of the underlying theory and model with a description of the process actually used to establish the new DoIT units, providing a blueprint for change for those with a penchant for the revolutionary.

One of the greatest challenges in supporting academic departments’ use of technology is to understand their needs and provide technology that is responsive to their strategic priorities. At the University of Michigan, a program based on a series of partnerships between central IT staff and deans of academic units not only provides relevant technological support, but also promises to remove some barriers to effective academic departmental planning for IT. The program has been so successful that a new area in the IT division has been created, responsible for the management of customer relations.

How might a campus with fewer resources approach departmental support, especially without making structural changes or redefining or adding staff positions? Pepperdine University’s Information Resources Service Partner Program is a fairly simple solution to a complex problem. It provides volunteer “Service Partners” from within the Information Resources (IR) organization to underserved client groups. Essentially the program is based on voluntary service (with no additional compensation provided), to ensure that the people who function as Service Partners will be enthusiastic about providing the service. Participation also provides an opportunity for job diversity and cross-training.

At the University of Idaho (see Campus Profile), a flattened and more flexible organizational structure has been the key to the Computer Services organization’s ability to adapt quickly to change—that, and the employment of a quality management philosophy and teams approach to services delivery. Formal team training has educated staff to the true meaning of “empowerment” and enabled the approach to be successful.

While the advantages are fairly transparent to staff who have been empowered, it’s not at all clear, say authors Conrad and Murphy, what the benefits are to managers of such staff. Their Viewpoint article raises and answers the question: What is the role of a manager in a teams environment?

**Networked information—policy and management issues**

As communications and converging digital technologies continue to offer opportunities to provide information services in innovative ways, our campuses face mounting policy and management issues as a consequence of a rapidly expanding networked information environment: access and security; privacy, confidentiality, and freedom of expression; applications and support issues. All of these need to be addressed from a campuswide perspective.

The University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill has developed an exemplary policy framework for addressing electronic rights and responsibilities at UNC–CH. The policy framework document is included in its entirety in the article by Graves, Jenkins, and Parker, which summarizes the strategies and rationales used in its development.

Impacts of the networked information environment on academic libraries also are mounting, leaving many information resources professionals in these organizations struggling to plan for a digital future while dealing with the realities of the present. Authors Brodie and McLean teamed up to propose a new information resource provision paradigm based on corporate business process reengineering theory, while McDaniel and Epp relate a less-than-successful venture into fee-based information services that left the University of Hartford’s library and computing services thoughtfully contemplating what went wrong.

We continue to be thankful to all of the campus information resources professionals who take the time to share their experiences through publication in CAUSE/EFFECT. Please consider joining their ranks soon!

*Julia A. Rudy, Editor*