summary:

i. in the article “it doesn't matter” nicholas carr says that due to fiscal challenges and the commodization of it, it is critically important to find ways to spend less on it. two examples of it governance that enable institutions to spend less are:

1. the australian model. due to the large student to staff ratio, it staffs are quite lean. thus, there are few it staff members out in the academic and administrative units. most, if not all, are in the central it unit. this is a huge cost savings, but could result in it being divorced from faculty needs. a common form of governance to involve faculty is to have groups of academic faculty (e.g. “the faculty of the school of liberal arts”, “the faculty of the school of engineering”) prioritize proposals submitted to them by the central it unit. this gives faculty governance tasks without their home academic units having to fund their own it staffs.

2. the wisconsin-milwaukee model: due to the state’s fiscal crisis, the executives of the institution have given the cio a form of authority over the distributed it staff. also, the cio forms ad hoc groups to explore issues, such as “moving to one email system” and make recommendations. after the recommendation, an ad hoc group is formed to carry out the recommendations. the group members are mainly not from the central it unit. this helps keep the costs of central it down. the head of the group “reports” to the cio for the purpose of the activity.

ii. other examples of governance:

1. the george mason model: a technology council, comprised of the technology thought leaders from throughout the university, is charged with exploring an issue (e.g. “moving to one email system, implementing authentication and authorization”, “developing web standards”). the council explores the issue, makes recommendations, and designs the implementation and supports the it staff throughout the implementation. mason also has a faculty senate it committee and an administrative systems advisory group.

2. u. of albany’s model: it unit obtains broad input from faculty, staff and students. then develops goals that are mapped to the university’s goals. each it project is then related to one of the it goals. the next step is to take to the executive team for prioritization.

3. academic advisory groups: people seem to feel that these groups
are often not as effective as administrative advisory groups. “It’s a mistake to think that faculty can articulate their IT needs” said one discussant. Other pitfalls: usually very operationally focused rather than thinking about the future, often faculty who volunteer for the committee are pushing an individual agenda.

4. Administrative Advisory Groups: Usually quite effective. Registrars, Deans of Admissions, Comptrollers, etc. know what they need to make their offices run more efficiently and know who to articulate these needs. Pitfall: Seldom think about the role of the faculty member as a manager so seldom recommend that the IT unit work on projects that would make the faculty member’s or the department chair’s life easier.

5. Blended Groups: Several participants have had good success with blended groups, particularly for web and portal management. One participant did not agree that blended groups are more effective than homogenous groups.

6. Teaching and Learning Roundtables (TLR): One participant noted that the research shows that TLR groups reporting to the Provost accomplish more than TLR groups reporting to the CIO. One CIO present disagreed.

7. Working with the Executive Staff to Set Priorities: People are interested in this issue, but time ran out before we could really explore it.

III. Some General Observations:

· Effective governance takes a good deal of the IT leader’s time. · Faculty advisory groups are important, but need to be finessed, since faculty seldom have the time to become fully educated on the issues. · It’s difficult to get faculty to give a high priority to emerging technologies and/or disruptive technologies, yet being involved with a few of these is essential for the viability of an IT organization. · IT leaders appear willing to have user groups prioritize spending for new projects, but are not willing to have user groups make decisions about staff and resource allocations within the IT unit - yet, that’s where most of the resources are. The unwillingness is likely due to two factors: 1) the users groups are not accountable for the outcomes; 2.) members of the users groups do not have the time or interest to become sufficiently educated on all of the responsibilities of the IT unit and so aren’t in a position to prioritize between disparate functions (e.g. “security vs. a help desk”, or “staffing the server group vs. staffing the network group”) · There is very little student involvement in setting priorities, other than to recommend allocations from a student technology fee.

IV. Recommendations:

1. Educause ought to classify governance as a SIG so that a listserv can be established for those engaged in governance building.

2. Governance should be a track in future conferences.