Earlier this year, a survey of EDUCAUSE members identified IT-related faculty development, support, and training as one of the top two issues of importance for the strategic success of their institutions; survey results also revealed that respondents were spending a significant amount of their time on IT strategic planning. Several articles in this issue of EQ share experiences related to these challenges or suggest new ways to think about them.

As technology-enhanced teaching and learning becomes more widespread on many campuses, IT professionals are increasingly expected to provide systematic support and training programs for faculty. For such programs to be successful, faculty need to be engaged and motivated, embracing the idea that technology can, indeed, enhance—even transform—education. This is far more likely to occur when institutional strategies for technology-enhanced teaching and learning have been clearly articulated and widely accepted. But what are the motivating factors for colleges and universities to develop such strategies?

Because of its proximity to such high-tech firms as MCI WorldCom, AOL, and Oracle, George Mason University found significant external motivation to launch an initiative that would ensure that its liberal arts graduates would have a high degree of fluency in information technology. The Technology Across the Curriculum (TAC) program, an ongoing collaborative effort between the College of Arts and Sciences and the Division of Instructional Improvement and Instructional Technologies, is based on a core of ten technology goals, developed with faculty consensus, which provides a framework for the systematic integration of technology skills across degree programs. Authors Anne Agee and Dee Ann Holisky share five factors that have contributed to the success of the TAC program at George Mason.

Viewpoint author Todd Kelley explores other factors that should motivate liberal arts colleges and universities to make IT an integral part of their academic programs and to ensure information-literate communities. If your institution hasn't yet articulated a strategic vision for information technology, you may find this viewpoint a valuable tool to help make the case on your campus that the future of liberal arts education is tied directly to the strategic use of IT.

In a related viewpoint, author Carol Macknight promotes the use of online discussions to support the teaching of critical thinking, an objective of many disciplines and a goal that Macknight says most faculty can aspire to. This article is another one that you might share with faculty, instructional technologists, and others on your campus as they explore ways to enhance teaching and learning with technology.

A couple of years ago, Marty Ringle and Dan Updegrove asked in an award-winning CAUSE/EFFECT article, “Is strategic planning for technology an oxymoron?” What kind of IT planning makes sense in times of rapidly changing technologies? Can IT planning move forward in the absence of the articulation and acceptance of institutional goals and strategies for IT? How can the IT planning process be integrated into the academic planning processes so that the allocation and use of resources are mutually supportive? You'll find the answers to these and other questions in author Jack Mccredie's excellent set of recommendations and insights for IT planners—lessons he has learned through his many years as an IT leader and more recently through a successful planning experience at the University of California Berkeley.

Julia A. Rudy, Editor

At Austin Community College, information technology is used to leverage existing resources, develop solutions, and enhance already strong academic offerings.

O n the cover:
Austin Community College provides education for a diverse community in a booming, high-tech metropolitan area.

Cover photograph and photograph above: George Smith
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