Developing an Effective IT Governance Structure from the Ground Up

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EDUCAUSE 2011 Southeast Regional Conference
Regional state university within the Purdue system
- Primarily a teaching-based university
- About 10% of the budget comes from research-based activity

- 750 faculty and staff
- 10,000 FTE students
  - 9,000 undergraduate
  - 1,000 graduate
- 25,000 registered users of computing facilities
<table>
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<th>Information Services</th>
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<td><strong>New division created in 2009</strong></td>
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<td>• Combination of centralized Information Technology and University Library</td>
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<td><strong>Approximately 60 FTE</strong></td>
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<td>• 20 in Library</td>
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<td>• 40 in IT units</td>
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<td>• About 100 student workers</td>
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<td><strong>Some services are provided at the Purdue system level</strong></td>
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<td>• Financial systems (hosting and day-to-day operations)</td>
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<td>• Course management system hosting (Blackboard Vista)</td>
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<td>• Library management system hosting (Voyager)</td>
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<td><strong>Minimal school-level, decentralized IT</strong></td>
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<td>• School of Engineering, Math, and Science</td>
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<td>• School of Technology</td>
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Why Information Services?

Synergy

- Changing nature of library
- Evolving role of information technology

Move from an IT-centric view of technology

- Managing information rather than technology
- Focus on mission, goals, and projects that support the work of the university

Shifting to a mindset of experimentation, innovation, and risk taking
New direction needed

IT not perceived as responding to campus needs

- Culture of “no”
- Top-down, authoritarian management model

Broaden focus

- High performance computing
- More than just the student information system
- New technologies – panoply of mobile devices

Narrow focus

- To University’s strategic objectives
- Not just respond to local issues regardless of importance
Obvious problems

No disaster recovery plan

Poor project ingestion

- No process for determining project value or priority
  - Whoever screamed the loudest
- Extremely detailed project planning process
  - Wasn’t followed once complete
- Major projects were not being managed responsibly

Budgets were incomprehensible

Myriad of overlapping and conflicting committees that were “in charge”
Things we didn’t know

Resource capacity and demand

- Minor consideration of non-discretionary projects
- No accounting for incremental maintenance growth

Capacity for strategic projects

- Reduced ability to provide strategic value to the University
A major turnaround effort

- Developing a plan for a disaster recovery plan
- Organizing project ingestion and planning
  - Establish a process for determining project value and priority
  - Streamline project management
- Properly allocate budgets
  - Allocate money where it was really needed
- Rethink “steering committees”
What is governance about?

- A repeatable, rational process to collect ideas, select projects, prioritize

Some givens from the outset

Address multiple issues simultaneously
Move at different speeds depending on issue
Will take longer than anyone would prefer
Decisions on “business” related IT issues and concerns shifted to business units

- Does not include infrastructure
- Increase faculty and non-IT staff input into decision making

Lessen the role of IT as final decision maker

Greater emphasis on collaboration
Basic principles

**Review research**
- EDUCAUSE
- Gartner, Forrester
- JISC

**Talk to others**
- Actual peers, aspirational peers

**Find models and best practices**
- Look at current models – ITIL, CoBIT, etc.
- Select those that will fit our organizational culture

**Adapt models and best practices for our environment**

**Communicate frequently**
- Problems and process
Critical factors

- Equitable allocation of resources in a financially and staff constrained environment
- Defined, repeatable decision making processes
- Clarification and empowerment of decision makers throughout the university
- Encouraging participation and leveraging expertise
  - Different levels of the organization
  - Different areas of expertise
- Allocation of resources according to University priorities
- Measurement of success against defined, known outcomes
Focus more on evaluating “business” issues
- Less time on the technology

Create process for making hard (unpopular) decisions
- Develop universally palatable rationales for such decisions

Push down smaller decisions for efficiency
- Devote more time and consideration to high-cost/high-impact projects
Charged a committee to investigate options
- Committee met several times in period of four months
- Reviewed all existing committees and structures

Committee made a basic recommendation on structure

This was then “tweaked” with input from other campus communities
- Senior leadership
- Deans
- Students
Issues raised

Understanding true demand

Transparency vs. control

Increasing value placed on IT

Empowerment of non-IT people

• Remove the focus on the means by focusing on the ends
Who should participate?

- Faculty Senate, Deans Council
- Administrators (Senior Leadership)
- Administrative Offices
- Financial Services, Registrar
- Decentralized IT groups
- Student groups

Who should advise?

Who should make decisions?

How does this relate to existing groups, positions, and functions?
Previous intersections of governance

Administrative

Research

Faculty

Academic (Schools)

Students
New intersections of governance

Academic (Schools)

Administrative

Research

Faculty

Students
Some notable points

Recommendations flow upward and are approved at the appropriate level

All groups have two convenors

- IT liaison
- Functional Convenor

Overlapping appointments in groups is kept to a minimum

- Functional cross committee appointments are made though
What levels of maturity do our IT services need to have?

As a rule, a group or person is necessary to support governance operations\(^1\). This usually takes the form of:

- IT Governance Office
- Portfolio Management Office
- Project Management Office

We simply do not have the resources to dedicate a person to this function

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What are governance operations?

- Working with committee chairs/conveners
- Framing decision points for decision-makers
- Briefing senior leadership
- Liaising between groups
- Scheduling meetings
- Disseminating and gathering information
- Preparing and assisting with meeting materials
Other benefits

Risk assessment and mitigation

Budgets allocated to functional managers

Formal financial allocations
Assessment

- Too often, the focus is on monitoring and controlling
- The real question is “Are we being effective?”

Some indicators include:
- Overall project portfolio status
- Individual project status and performance
  - Interventions/Targeting at-risk projects
- Project financial performance status
- Customer Satisfaction
What’s improved?

- Formal project request and evaluation process
  - Administrators
  - Faculty
  - Staff
  - Students

- Broad participation in committees

- Project proposals linked to funding
Areas for improvement

- Resource planning
  - Project leveling
  - Resource utilization measurement

- Project completion projection accuracy

- Increase visibility of faculty and students in process

- Develop a dashboard/scorecard for important metrics

- Communication of initiatives
Some lessons learned

You can’t please everyone

- There will never be complete agreement
- Most important aspect is all stakeholders have a voice and appropriate decision-making rights

An elaborate committee structure may be required

- Not necessarily related to institutional size

Managing the structure requires involvement at all levels

- And a significant amount of time

Must reiterate the message constantly

If you ask questions, you need to listen to the answers
Some useful resources

- IT Governance Institute
  - [http://www.itgi.org/](http://www.itgi.org/)