

MnSCU IT Emerging Strategic Plan and Proposed Governance Structure

Developed by the MnSCU IT Strategic
Planning Team January through June, 1999

MnSCU Information Technology Strategic Plan

The MnSCU Information Technology Strategic Planning Initiative was conducted in the period January through June of 1999 and facilitated by an organization development consultant from Harley Consulting and Coaching, Inc. The initiative participants (called the MnSCU IT Strategic Planning Team) were comprised of IT and related professionals from throughout the MnSCU System as well as members of the MnSCU central office staff. The Team was appointed by the Senior Vice Chancellor, Vice Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer. The participants were:

Member	Location
Adam Zobel	Southwest SU (student)
Bill Harley	Harley Training & Consulting
Bill Tschida	System Office
Cheryl Frank	Inver Hills CC
Dan Pecarina	Winona SU
Dennis Nielsen	Metro SU
Doug Keran	Central Lakes, Brainerd
Gary Rhodes	Riverland College
Harry Pontiff	System Office
Jill Buitendyk	Southwest SU
Jim Pehler	IFO-St. Cloud SU
Joe Sertich	Itasca CC
John Asmussen	System Office
Judy Harris	Rochester CTC
Ken Brumbaugh	Minneapolis CTC
Ken Niemi	System Office
Ken Peeders	Fergus Falls CC
Kristi Tornquist	St. Cloud SU
Laura King	System Office
Les Bakke	Moorhead SU
Leslie Mercer	System Office
Linda Baer	Sysetm Office
Mary Choate	MnSCU Board Member
Morrie Anderson	System Office
Pat Rogers	Bemidji SU
Peggy Kennedy	St. Paul TC
Phil Davis	Minneapolis CTC
Robert Musgrove	Pine TC
Susan Hatfield	Winona SU
Sylverna Ford	MN SU, Mankato

Member	Location
Terry Meath	Normandale CC

The Guiding Principles and Mission Statement

Definition

Early on, the team established the following definition relating to the meaning of the term MnSCU Information Technology.

Information Technology in this context means the full range of technology, both administrative and academic, used in furthering the MnSCU mission.

Guiding Principles

Next the strategic planning team asked itself the question, "What principles and values do we want to guide the creation and implementation of the mission, vision and strategic plan for Information Technology within MnSCU?" The group then reached consensus on the following values and Guiding Principles for MnSCU IT.

- IT must support the institutional missions of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities.
- IT must enhance learning.
- IT must be reliable, user-friendly, and appropriately accessible.
- IT must balance common, diverse and unique needs of the campuses.
- IT must be visionary and dynamic.
- IT investment in people must balance the investment in technology.
- IT must be customer-driven.
- IT must manage expectations, cost and effectiveness.

Mission Statement

After completing a scan of the current situation, the team identified the core customer-desired outcomes of MnSCU IT. These core outcomes were then embedded in the following MnSCU IT Mission Statement, which the group created to answer the question, "Who are we and why are we here"?

***The Mission of Information Technology
Within the
Minnesota State Colleges & Universities***

We provide technological support for achieving success in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities' learning enterprise. Our system and campus services:

- Enhance teaching and learning.
- Strengthen leadership, planning, and decision-making.
- Increase technology-user productivity.
- Generate confident and satisfied students, faculty, and staff.
- Ensure timely and efficient access to information.

A key to our success is maintaining a balance between a reliable common infrastructure and the flexibility to tailor to local needs. Ultimately, we provide the innovative services and tools to help Minnesotans shape and adjust to the future in the Knowledge Age

The MnSCU IT Vision and Barrier Analysis

5-YEAR PRACTICAL VISION (Recognizable Conditions)

As the first step in the formal strategic planning process, the team created the following 5-Year Practical Vision by reaching consensus on the recognizable conditions they wanted to have in place within Minnesota State Colleges and Universities in regards to information technology by the year 2004.

- Ubiquitous understanding and application of technology
- 100% user satisfaction
- Effective and directly accessible decision support systems
- Ongoing and adequate resource investment to support the IT vision
- An internationally recognized competitive advantage
- Preferred "bookmark" for educational opportunities
- Universal access to enhanced learning resources
- Organizational structures aligned for effectiveness

Barrier Analysis

Next, the strategic planning team turned its attention to identifying the barriers and contradictions, which are obstacles on the path to this Vision of the Future. The intent was not to identify what was missing, but to identify what was present to inhibit the achievement of the Vision. The group reached consensus on the following Barriers:

- Outdated or inflexible laws, contracts and policies
- Misalignment between funding and planning
- Mutual distrust arising from a history of inadequate leadership
- Immature systems development environment
- Unclear, conflicting or non-collaborative organizational structures
- Inadequate human resource development and technology support
- Fragmented planning

Strategic Directions and Arenas of Action

Once the initiative participants had identified the 5-Year Practical Vision and the Barriers to accomplishing that Vision, they were ready to create 1-2 Year Strategic Directions to dissolve or remove the Barriers and accelerate movement towards the Vision.

Strategic Directions and Arenas of Action

The participants brainstormed practical and innovative actions that directly or indirectly would eliminate, deal with, or resolve the barriers and obstacles and move the enterprise toward its Practical Vision. Those actions with similar intent were grouped into Arenas of Action seen as essential over the next few years. The Arenas of Action were then arranged into groups to reveal the Strategic Directions or major vectors of action to be pursued over the next 1-2 years. Following are the numbered **Strategic Directions** and the supporting **Arenas of Action** (bulleted) upon which the group reached consensus.

- 1) **Acquiring and managing resources**
 - **Getting and spending the money**
 - **Creating flexibility in HR management**
 - **Getting and keeping technology skills current**
- 2) **Planning, implementing and evaluating for success**
 - **Coordinating on-going planning**
 - **Setting goals and measuring outcomes**
 - **Assuring information system quality**
- 3) **Communicating to achieve trust and understanding**
 - **Improving communications**
- 4) **Organizing for effectiveness**
 - **Reorganizing IT governance**

The strategic planning team agreed that specific and measurable goals and objectives need to be identified and implemented under each of the Arenas of Action (bulleted items). This will be done in the next phase of our planning work. However, Strategic Direction number 4, "Organizing for Effectiveness", and the Supporting Arena of Action, "Reorganizing IT Governance", were deemed by the participants to be so urgent that the group devoted 1 1/2 days to developing the process and recommendations that follow.

Reorganizing the IT Governance Structure

While developing objectives and goals for Strategic Directions numbers 1-3 will be completed in the next phase of the Strategic Planning Team's work, the team felt that Strategic Direction number 4 was a prerequisite to numbers 1-3. Consequently, the strategic planning team turned its attention to optimizing the MnSCU IT governance structure.

Governance Structure Evaluation Criteria

As a first step, the team reached consensus on the following evaluation criteria to be used to evaluate any governance structure concepts that would be developed.

An effective MnSCU IT governance structure is one which:

- 1) Is accountable, flexible and responsive
- 2) Emphasizes teaching and learning
- 3) Is representative of all campuses and stakeholders
- 4) Is effective and action oriented
- 5) Promotes communication
- 6) Facilitates consensus building
- 7) Empowers and motivates employees
- 8) Is faithful to plan

The above criteria are listed in order of importance. Next the group distinguished the Evaluation Criteria by weighing them against importance ratings as follows:

- 1) **Important** –desirable, but not critical to a satisfactory structure and consequently expendable;
- 2) **Very Important** –very desirable, but not totally critical to a satisfactory structure and consequently somewhat negotiable or expendable;
- 3) **Critical** –absolutely required for a satisfactory structure to the extent that, if missing or weak, the structure must be redesigned to adequately provide it.

The evaluation criteria determined to be "critical" were "**Is accountable, flexible and responsive**" and "**Emphasizes teaching and learning**". The other criteria fell into either the "very important" or "important" rating categories.

Refer to the Appendix for an illustration of the Structure Evaluation Worksheet used to compile the data.

Recommendations

After considering various governance structure design alternatives, the team reached consensus on the following governance structure design elements.

The Proposed Governance Structure

- **MnSCU's Chief Information Officer should report to one individual in the System Office, ideally the Chancellor, to better reflect academic and administrative information technology integration. The CIO's responsibility should include an equal emphasis on both academic and administrative IT policy initiatives.**
- **Although regional advisory groups are valuable, a CIO or similar position should remain at the campus level.**
- **The CIO at the campuses should be a college or university-designated contact person for IT issues. Campus Chief Information Officers' reporting relationships should be at the discretion of the campuses.**
- **The Integrated Council should be renamed the System-wide Technology Roundtable. This group should be comprised of a representative sample of students, faculty, presidential and chancellor appointees, administrative users, external stakeholders, and campus CIO's. This group should be empowered to:**
 - **Recommend policy**
 - **Engage in strategic planning**
 - **Set priorities**
 - **Authorize system-wide IT committees**
 - **Foster good communication**

- **Both academic and administrative user groups should serve in an advisory position to the Technology Roundtable.**

What to Do Next

- Implement the proposed governance structure.
- Establish the new MnSCU Technology Roundtable by the end of September 1999.

The IT Strategic Planning Team will continue meeting to:

- Define and determine a transition process for existing groups to the new model.
- Address all IT needs and issues until the new MnSCU Technology Roundtable is fully formed and functioning.
- Complete Objectives and Goals for the four Strategic Directions and supporting Arenas of Action.
- Plan and launch an Implementation Timeline for the IT Strategic Plan.

Appendix

Structure Evaluation Worksheet

Criteria	Importance	Design Alternatives					
		A	B	C	D	E	F
1. Is accountable, flexible and responsive	3						
2. Facilitates consensus building	1						
3. Emphasizes teaching and learning	3						
4. Is representative of all campuses and stakeholders	2						
5. Is effective and action oriented	2						
6. Is faithful to plan	1						
7. Empowers and motivates employees	1						
8. Promotes communication	2						
Totals		0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Use These Ratings for Design Alternatives:</i> (Enter 1 rating for criteria 1-8 in each of columns A-F) 5 = Excellent 4 = Good 3 = Fair 2 = Poor 1 = Very Poor							
		Your Name:					