

Illinois Wesleyan University
Information Technology Annual Report 2008
“Accomplishments, Challenges & Opportunities”

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In his book *The Fifth Discipline*¹, Peter Senge makes a number of observations about organizations trying to achieve a shared vision of the future. He called organizations that were truly trying to strive toward such a vision “learning organizations”. Illinois Wesleyan is fortunate to be an institution that not only has learning as its purpose, but also has a group of dedicated colleagues pushing our community to learn how to achieve the ideals described in the University’s mission.

This report looks at how the office of Information Technology strives to contribute to our learning community. It reviews steps taken in the past year to move Illinois Wesleyan from its current reality toward our shared vision. We also provide a brief review of the information technology challenges ahead. This document presents a set of perspectives to inform our community and promote a dialogue that will help the University learn how to use its technology resources to successfully meet the goals outlined in the University’s strategic plan.

Accomplishments

In the 2007-2008 academic year the office of Information Technology made significant progress in completing projects and improving services. A summary of completed projects accompanies this report. In terms of staffing, we addressed a number of challenges. These included a forced reduction in student worker hours to accommodate an increase in the Illinois state minimum wage, the increased use of Sungard Remote DBA services beyond our planned budget, and a staffing transition that had us operating short one staff person for three months. Despite these challenges, we were able to complete technology projects and continue our efforts to implement ITIL² best practices for service management. These service efforts included establishing a service catalog, service level agreements for all IT services, and an improved change management process. We also took a number of steps to promote dialogue and discussion of information technology issues on campus. These efforts included:

- Administering Techqual+ surveys of students, faculty, and staff.
- Creating and maintaining the “IT @ IWU” blog for discussing Information Technology planning and operations (linked from the IT web site and within the my.iwu portal.)
- Creation of the instructional technology project team to better focus IT staff on the challenges of improving support for instruction on campus.
- Established the Tech Thursday e-mail newsletter for faculty and staff.
- Held an open forum in November to review IT accomplishments and plans.
- Established the third technology advisory committee³, the alumni technology advisory group, to seek insight from our alums and provide an additional perspective to help guide the University’s strategic plans for information technology.

We believe these steps have helped better position the office of Information Technology for the challenges ahead.

Challenges

The biggest challenges for Information Technology at Illinois Wesleyan are related to staffing and budget. In our last annual report we described the problem by noting:

“...the office of Information Technology is frequently asked to provide services that we have neither the time nor resources to deliver. This includes additional support for instructional technology, faster service response times, and upgrades and enhancements to administrative applications and network services.”⁴

While we were able to accomplish much in 2007-2008, the issues of staffing and budget continue to challenge our ability to meet the information technology needs of our campus community. As we noted in our analysis of the 2007 faculty and staff Techqual+ survey, the number of available IT staff is a concern.⁵ In addition, the tight budget planned for 2008-2009 will present a significant challenge for delivering services to the campus community. The combined budget increase for all Information Technology supply and expense accounts for 2008-2009 comes to just under \$18,000. This planned budget presents significant challenges:

- We will need a \$36,000 annual budget increase if we are to increase the bandwidth the University uses to connect to the Internet. *This upgrade is needed urgently.*
- Our use of Sungard remote DBA services came in more than \$45,000 over budget in 2007-2008. (This was partially offset by reduction in equipment purchases.)
- The annual “technical currency” charge for our Sungard Banner and Luminis products will increase 5% for a total increase of over \$5600
- We project other annual maintenance charges for licensed administrative software to increase by another \$3600
- We expect our annual maintenance bill on servers and network equipment will increase by nearly \$10,000.

Clearly the budget continues to be a major challenge for delivering information technology services. We are grateful that a number of capital projects for 2008-2009 have been funded for information technology. These capital projects will:

- Replace the more than 20-year old cooling unit in the data center.
- Extend the campus network to add the Welcome Center and East Street apartments, as well as add additional wireless and begin replacing our oldest network electronics.
- Add a networked digital-camera security system to four residence halls and the Memorial Center.

However, the majority of projects that we identified as needing funding in our 2007 report remain unfunded⁶. Budget and staffing present the biggest challenges for finding information technology solutions to meet the goals of the University’s strategic plan.

Opportunities

Despite our budget and staffing challenges, the University does have a number of cost saving and service enhancement opportunities for using information technology. Areas that we plan to continue to investigate for cost savings include:

- Increased use of open-source applications such as the Moodle, the OpenLDAP directory, and Samba file-sharing services
- Hosting university generated podcasts on iTunes-U.
- The free Ustream.tv service for live video streaming
- The free Google mail service and other Google apps for our campus community.

Sungard has also announced a number of service enhancements and improvements in their Banner and Luminis systems. We planning to move to Banner 8.1 and Luminis 4.1 in the summer of 2009, and it may be possible for us to upgrade to Luminis sooner. Improvements we expect to see from these Sungard upgrades include:

- Improvements to the course and group tools in my.iwu, with a channel showing changes in course tools and groups on the main page of the portal.
- Customer relationship management (CRM) capabilities in the student module for student retention, and improved web usability.
- Enhanced support for wait list functionality.
- Architecture changes in Banner 8 that provide for true single sign-on capability.

In addition, Sungard has announced a new Enrollment Management product with additional CRM and reporting capabilities. While Enrollment Management would require an additional investment, this application would significantly improve the ability of the admissions office to attract and enroll students.

Conclusions

There is a tension between where we are now and where the University would like to be with technology. Clearly budget and staffing levels contribute to that tension. We made many improvements in the past year, and plan to use available resources and opportunities to address the challenges ahead.

The office of Information Technology continues to look for creative ways to address the information technology needs of the University. It is our goal, in the next year, to work with our three technology advisory committees to clearly articulate an information technology strategic plan. This plan will help provide the focus the University needs to understand the critical importance of its information technology resources for achieving the University's strategic plan. Illinois Wesleyan University is a learning organization. It is through the intelligent use of information technology that we help our campus community learn how to best achieve the University's mission.

Selected information technology projects completed in 2007-2008

Administrative Systems

Emergency Notification System

We installed, tested, and used the Connect-ED system for notifying our campus community in emergency situation. This work included creating a data collection “channel” on my.iwu to simplify collection of data such as personal cell phone numbers in Banner.

Enhanced class list features

We added a Banner enhancement from the College of Sequoia that lets us provide enhanced class list features for faculty from the My.IWU portal.

OQ Measures for Counseling Center

We installed OQ Measures software to help the Counseling Center better assess clients’ progress.

Payroll Processing to Banner

Working with the Business Office and the Controller’s office, we successfully moved the University’s payroll from ADP to Banner.

Development Office Systems Review

We completed our three year review of systems for Advancement and helped implement the outsourced iModules alumni “web community” system.

Fix Banner/Luminis roles for alumni

We resolved a process problem that prevented graduating students from being identified properly as alumni in our electronic directory.

Fix Registration

When registration performance problems remained after moving to Banner 7, IT staff worked with Sungard to install a new Banner server in time for the Fall 2008 registration event. The new server resolved the performance problems.

CAPP improvements

Working with the Registrar’s office and Sungard, IT staff helped with resolving problems in both Sungard’s code and our data. We went live with Banner’s Curriculum Audit and Program Planning software on the web in April.

Resource 25 Room and Event Scheduling

Working with a team of staff from the Registrar’s office and Student Affairs, IT staff helped with the implementation of CollegeNet’s Resource 25 scheduling software (R25) to improve the University’s room and event scheduling.

Web site redesign

Working with the staff of the office of University Communications, IT staff used our content management system to implement the redesigned templates for the University web site.

Instructional Technology

TechQual+ Assessments for Students, Faculty and Staff

We conducted two Techqual+ assessments; students in the Spring, and Faculty-Staff in the Fall. These assessments gave us a better understanding of our campus community's perception of technology service quality.

Web meeting capabilities

We successfully tested web meeting capabilities at the Alumni Technology Advisory Group meeting on 10/19. This is a pay-per-connection model using an outsourced service.

Clickers

IT staff worked with the Mellon Center to introduce a pilot program to test the use of "clickers" in the classroom. These electronic devices let students answer multiple-choice questions anonymously, and help the faculty member better assess how well a class understands course concepts.

Digital Library & Institutional Repository Projects

We worked with the library on implementation details for the new Bepress institutional repository system. This service is an off-campus hosted service.

Blog Support

We announced support for on-campus host blogs at the IT Open Forum on 11/8. This service allows faculty, staff and student groups to request blogs in much the same manner as our older e-mail list service.

Network Projects

IT Security Policy Review

We created a comprehensive IT Security Policy for the University. This policy was reviewed and approved by a representative from the University's insurance agency.

Spam filter replacement Summer 2007

We replaced our old spam filter system with a new system from RedCondor.

Power for data center Fall 2007

We added needed power in the data center and installed a new UPS system.

Multi-function copier networking

We worked with University Communications to provide network and fax capabilities for the new leased multi-function copiers. We also added the system's "digital storefront" server.

Network switch software updates

Our network manager updated the software in the network switches used in every building on campus to improve security and reliability.

Disk Storage for e-mail Fall 2007

We moved mail to a new e-mail server, and increased e-mail quotas to 250Mb.

Technology Support for the NCAA Volleyball Tournament

We added wireless and video capabilities in the Shirk Center to meet the requirements of the 2007 NCAA Division III volleyball championship.

Additional wireless & upgrades

This added additional wireless access points on campus, and upgraded our older wireless access points. We now support wireless networking in over two-thirds of University classrooms. Wireless networking is now available in:

- The Ames Library
- The Buck Memorial Library
- The Center for Natural Sciences
- The Hansen Student Center
- The Memorial Center
- Shaw Hall
- Stevenson Hall
- Evelyn Chapel
- Holmes Hall (2nd floor)
- The Shirk Center

¹ Senge, Peter, *The Fifth Discipline: the Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, Doubleday, New York, 1990.

² Information Technology Infrastructure Library: a set of best practices for managing information technology services. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ITIL>

³ The other two Illinois Wesleyan University technology advisory committees are the Teaching, Learning, and Technology Roundtable; and the Administrative Steering Committee.

⁴ "Information Technology Annual Report 2007", p. 2.; linked from <http://www2.iwu.edu/IT/about/itreports.shtml> as "2007 Summary Report"

⁵ "2007 Faculty-Staff Survey Analysis" linked from <http://www2.iwu.edu/IT/about/itreports.shtml>

⁶ "Information Technology Annual Report 2007", p. 5.