4.2 Developing Strategic Communications

Major Issue: As users of technology faculty, staff and students need to stay informed of changes to IT services on our campus. These constituencies also need a way to join in the conversation about the future of IT services. IT communication should not be viewed as a one-way conversation between ITS and its customers but rather should be an inclusive loop. In the end, the conversation about IT services should make all parties more successful consumers and providers of IT services.

A. Background/Rationale

IT communication on the CU-Boulder campus is mainly driven by Information Technology Services and is largely one-way. ITS provides documentation and service information on a website that is dated and difficult to navigate. Other ITS communication vehicles include a once-a-semester newsletter to faculty and staff, an IT security awareness campaign, and an orientation program called ITS Quick Start. ITS also makes use of campus communication channels such as E-memos, Buff Bulletins, and Inside CU to communicate service changes.

ITS established the Tier 2 program in 2001 to better connect with the IT needs of departments, schools and colleges across campus. While the program has been successful in leveraging Tier 2 Computer Support Representatives (CSRs) to relay information from ITS to their respective departments, CSRs have been underutilized as a feedback mechanism to ITS. Some CSRs are IT professionals while others may have little or no IT background. This leads to difficulties utilizing CSRs as IT points of contact within campus units.

Another factor that contributes to the lack of feedback to ITS is the lack of IT governance structures on the campus. Our campus has both a strong central IT organization and strong campus IT but lacks the governance and communication structure to support the two. A dynamic communication structure needs to accommodate both central IT and decentralized IT needs.

Our campus needs to evaluate current IT communication strategies and identify new communication processes and vehicles that will successfully engage all campus constituents in dialogue about IT services and support and their future on our campus.

B. Accomplishments to Date – Efforts to Improve Communication

- The following communication vehicles and support structures have been created to better inform the campus of IT initiatives and service changes:
  - Tier 2 organization and the IT Support Community Event, Tech Talks & Forums
  - ITS Quick Start for students
  - Oneonone newsletter for faculty and staff
  - Security awareness campaigns
  - ITS website
  - 5-HELP Service

Action Plan

A. Explicit Assumptions
The term “campus IT” is considered to be all people who perform some sort of IT work on the CU Boulder campus, including people outside of ITS.

For item “Campus IT Mission,” we assume that a body of constituents will be available to garner input for creation of a campus-wide IT mission. This body will most likely be formed out of the IT Governance committee as part of the overall strategic planning process. The term “The committee” in this chapter refers to the IT Strategic Plan’s Strategic Communications Committee.

B. Specific Recommendations

1. Define and Communicate the Mission of IT

Problem: The committee recognizes the perception on campus that there is a lack of IT strategic direction. Currently there are no clearly communicated IT governance structures and IT organizations are largely autonomous with few standards. There is no common campuswide understanding of how to fulfill the mission of supporting faculty, staff and student computing and communication needs or requirements as set by university leadership. ITS does have a mission statement but is insufficient to describe the mission of the organizations that fall outside of ITS’ domain or services.

Recommendation: Campus IT, in conjunction with faculty, staff, students, and the Associate Vice Chancellor of IT, perform the following tasks:

- Create a campus-wide IT mission statement, ensuring the mission is up-to-date with the most recent campus vision (currently Flagship 2030), and
- Communicate the campus-wide IT mission through appropriate campus channels to appropriate campus IT constituents.
- Also ITS leadership should perform the following tasks:
- Review and revise the ITS mission statement to ensure the mission is up-to-date with the campus-wide mission, and
- Communicate the revised ITS mission through the appropriate campus channels to appropriate campus IT constituents.

2. Campus IT Roles and Responsibilities Inventory

Problem: A significant gap exists in the understanding of the breadth and depth of campus IT service, support and expertise currently provided by different organizations on campus. This gap in understanding means incorrect assumptions could be (and most likely are) made about departmental expertise and communication needs.

Recommendation: The Associate Vice Chancellor of IT should commission a periodic inventory of campus organizations that maintain IT structures (including ITS) to guide campus IT strategic planning and leverage IT expertise on our campus. This inventory should be used to help the sharing of IT expertise between departments. Specifically, the inventory should identify the following:

- People performing IT activities on campus and the organizational requirement they fulfill. This includes all roles from the IT professional responsible for system administration of hardware, software and security to the administrative assistant with no technical expertise who was elected to update the department website,
• Assets (hardware/software) managed within campus organizations (outside of ITS) and the requirements they fulfill,
• Services which organizations provide using internal resources,
• Services which organizations rely on ITS to provide and maintain as either a common-good or purchased service,
• Services which organizations rely on other campus organizations to provide and maintain, and
• Services which organizations purchase from outside vendors.
• For more specifics and examples on the inventory collection, please see Appendix A.

3. Expand Face-to-Face Communication

Problem: Face-to-face communication with faculty, staff and students about IT issues is underutilized. Additionally the committee recognizes as new faculty, staff and students arrive at the university, not all new people have access to or are pointed to the pertinent information to effectively access campus IT services shortly after their arrival. An extensive amount of information is available online and through phone help, but this information may not be disseminated appropriately and can overwhelm users.

Recommendation: ITS, being in the best position to begin this dialogue, should expand the existing ITS Quick Start orientation program and departmental support meetings to:
• Include all faculty, staff, undergraduate and graduate students,
• Provide faculty, staff, and students with vital services in the first 48 hours on campus,
• Host “in person” events to connect new faculty, staff, and students with IT resources, documentation and providers on campus,
• Engage campus organizations with frequent open support meetings, narrowly focused on a specific department or organization, to interact with organizational personnel, faculty, staff, and students.

4. Evaluation of Campus Communication Technologies

Problem: The committee recognizes that the campus utilizes many different technologies such as email, mailing lists, and wikis to disseminate information to the campus for various topics or events. The volume of information sent to campus personnel is large and widely varied, and new technologies could exist that may better facilitate targeted communication.

Recommendation: ITS Communications, being in the best position to begin this dialogue, perform the following:
• Evaluate technologies and processes that will allow individuals to participate in IT dialogue or notifications at the level they determine appropriate, and
• Make recommendations to ITS leadership and campus IT regarding common-good services that would improve campus communication.
• For more specifics and examples on the types of technologies and processes to evaluate, please see Appendix B.

5. Evaluation of Student Support Process and Systems

Problem: Students often adopt new technology trends more rapidly than other campus constituents, leading to difficulties for inflexible support organizations.

Recommendation: The committee suggests that ITS partner with student-facing organizations
(Student Affairs, Orientation, Alumni Affairs, Housing, etc) to conduct an assessment of student IT support needs (including preferred methods of seeking support). The committee suggests that the results of such an assessment be made available to all campus organizations expressing interest, and be used by ITS as the basis for a program to educate ITS staff, faculty, and graduate students regarding student support preferences and any complimentary programs available.

6. Restructuring of the Tier 2 Computing Support Representative (CSR) Program

Problem: The Tier 2 CSR program, while effective in building a campuswide network to help inform departments of IT service changes, lacks campuswide recognition and standardization of roles and responsibilities. CSRs are in a prime position to represent departmental IT needs to ITS leadership for the purpose of strategic planning but are not formally recognized as such. Also, the current lack of uniform definition regarding the required skills of a CSR means that IT support is non-uniform across campus institutions.

Recommendation: ITS and the campus must formalize the role of the Tier 2 CSR program and those that serve in the role of CSR. The committee recommends that this include:

- Investigate changing the name and mission to provide IT professionals outside of ITS with a more meaningful and appropriate identity within the campus community.
- Develop a formal structural framework, including keeping minutes of Tier 2 Advisory Board meetings, development of a Tier 2/CSR website and creation of a formal process to fill board positions.
- Implement a Tier 2 mentoring program to help new CSRs rapidly become proficient in campus/ITS specific process and culture.
- Retool the CSR certification program to be more campus oriented and include information regarding campus services such as: website hosting, network management, software licensing, etc.
- A process and transparency needs to exist to allow CSRs to directly engage the appropriate ITS subject expert to resolve service and support issues.
- The committee suggests that ITS leadership, working with the ITS Tier 2 Liaison, investigate building a formal process by which the Tier 2 Advisory Board can make proposals directly to ITS leadership (or Campus IT leadership).
- ITS, working with representatives from the Colleges, departments, and campus constituents, identify guidelines that provide for CSRs to have a certain baseline of IT skills.
- Explore methods for departments to pool resources to appoint a shared CSR in instances where the department need is below levels that would provide for the hiring of qualified staff.
- For more information, please see Appendix A.

7. Stronger Collaboration Between University Communications & ITS

Problem: Communication between campus organizations and external entities is often non-uniform and varies depending on the parties involved. Few enterprise-level communication tools exist on campus and those that do exist are dated and inefficient. Many departments are forced to turn to third-party solutions and there is very little uniformity on campus.

Recommendation: Committee would direct ITS to partner with (and provide strong support for) University Communications in order to provide technical expertise and critical leadership in enhancing public communications. This partnership will likely require strong support from Campus IT. Examples of areas ITS could provide support are:
• Develop effective, consistent, and easily managed departmental, college, faculty, and university web sites.
• With input from faculty, staff, and students, build scalable infrastructure to support outreach efforts (educational and research oriented) that can be easily accessed by specific public and private constituencies.
• Development of flexible web "conversation" tools for students, faculty, staff, and members of the community.

8. ITS Website Reorganization and Redesign

Problem: The current ITS website is difficult to use and poorly organized for the role it has grown to play in supporting campus IT.

Recommendation: The committee recommends that ITS undertake a redesign of the website with the following goals:
• Strive to incorporate modern usability standards.
• Enable simpler navigation.
• Examine methods of providing solution based information.
• Examine role based portal technologies as possible replacements.
• Provide greater dynamic content to advise users of outages or current conditions.

C. Long & Short Term Objectives/Timeline

The target completion times of the above recommendations are listed here.

Immediate:
Define and Communicate Campus IT Mission
Define and Communicate ITS mission

Short Term (3-6 months):
Expand ITS Quick Start to include faculty, staff and graduate students - Could target for Fall 2010 or Spring 2011.
Host "in person" events to connect new faculty, staff, and students with IT resources, documentation and providers on campus.

Long Term (1-2 years):
Establish recurring schedule for Campus IT Roles and Responsibilities Inventory - Highest priority after defining the campus IT mission.
Redesign of the ITS Website.
Evaluation of Campus Communication Technologies
Evaluation of Departmental/Organizational Support Meetings
Evaluation of Student Support Process and Systems
Restructuring of the Tier 2 computing Support Representative (CSR) Program
Create a uniform definition of the Tier 2 CSR Representative
Stronger Collaboration between University Communications and ITS

D. Possible Risk
The Campus IT Roles and Responsibilities Inventory would help assure that campus IT personnel are meeting campus IT policies related to security and private data.

E. Resource Allocation

The Campus IT Roles and Responsibilities Inventory may require additional or reallocated staffing. It will also impact all department personnel as they take time to participate in the inventory.

Expanding IT Quickstart will require additional or reallocated funds and time.

External communication tool development and implementation of new public communication technologies will require additional or reallocated funds.

F. Responsible Parties

There is not just one responsible party. These recommendations must be accomplished through campus coordination. How that will be done is contingent on specifics of implementing the above recommendations, as well as responsibilities resulting from the definition of the Campus IT Mission.

G. Evaluation

The ultimate goal of this chapter is not easily measureable as it concerns communication between humans. A general evaluation of the main goal may be accomplished by answering the primary issue addressed in this chapter: Are campus users of technology part of an inclusive communication loop involving ITS, faculty, staff, and students? This broad question can be partially answered by evaluating the committee's ample specific recommendations through answering the following questions:

- Has the Campus IT Mission been established and communicated within 6 months of adoption of Strategic Plan?
- Has the ITS Mission been established and communicated within 6 months of adoption of Strategic Plan?
- Has the Campus IT Roles and Responsibilities Inventory been implemented within 6 months of adoption of Strategic Plan?
- Has the IT Quickstart program been expanded by Spring 2011.
- Has the ITS Website been redesigned and deployed within 6 months of adoption of Strategic Plan?
- Does the Campus IT Roles and Responsibilities Inventory have a periodic schedule for renewal and updates?
- Has there been an evaluation of Campus Communication Technologies performed within two years of adoption of the Strategic Plan?
- Has there been an evaluation of Departmental/Organizational Support Meetings within two years of adoption of the Strategic Plan?
- Has there been an evaluation of Student Support Process and Systems within two years of adoption of the Strategic Plan?
- Has the Tier 2 computing Support Representative (CSR) Program been restructured within two years of adoption of the Strategic Plan?
- Has two-way communication between ITS and Tier 2 Representatives increased within two years of adoption of the Strategic Plan?
• Has a new clear definition of the Tier 2 CSR representative been written and communicated within two years of adoption of the Strategic Plan?
• Is there stronger collaboration between University Communications and ITS within two years of adoption of the Strategic Plan?
Appendix A - Campus IT Roles and Responsibilities Inventory Suggestions

The following are suggestions for acquiring the necessary information for the recommendation of Campus IT Roles and Responsibilities Inventory. This is not an exhaustive list of what should be asked, but is tailored to communication-related items. While this inventory is occurring, it would be useful to ask questions related to all IT activities to drive decision making and planning for all ITS projects. Some questions that have arisen from discussion have motivated the need to do the inventory, such as:

How many departments are duplicating services already provided by ITS, and why?
What percentage of people listed as responsible for IT in their organization (such as desktop support, email support, etc) are non-technical people (either not trained or no background)?
What percentage of IT faculty/staff/students surveyed/interviewed know that 5-HELP exists and is available to them?
How many people use the website to obtain IT information versus calling people around campus?

There are many useful data points to be considered from such an inventory to identify both strategic communication channels as well as information that could be used for other strategic purposes for the campus. The following is a list of initial IT roles that are identified to exist, and more than one role is typically applied to a single person:

Server administrator
  - hardware monitoring/replacement
Service administrator
  - email
web manager/webmaster
dns
custom room reservation
user authentication
Desktop administrator (hardware)
  - hardware monitoring/replacement
Desktop administrator (software and support)
  - backups
  - interface with campus AD (user authentication)
pslite
MS office
  - email client
other software
Software management (Updates, imaging, security, etc.)
Network administrator
  - hardware
  - configuration
  - wiring
  - network liaison with ITS
Content administrator
  - website
  - email list (subscription management and/or sending out email to lists)
ITS contact person
  - security notifications from Dan Jones et. al.
Tier2 notifications
IT support community notifications
General IT Coordinator
Position requires information and notifications from all systems IT services (UIS, HR, ITS, others?)
Each of these roles will need targeted communication depending on the kind of setup of
systems. For example, if a server is configured to authenticate to the campus Kerberos server,
the person responsible for that server will need communications from ITS whenever that
authentication service will be changed or be under maintenance, etc. These dependencies must
be identified and the appropriate communication channels must be developed to meet the
communication needs for these roles.
Another example is that if an Office Administrator is responsible for updating the department
website and he/she uses ITS web hosting, she will need communications from ITS regarding
service downtimes, changes, or upgrades. However, if an Office Administrator from another
department uses off-campus web hosting or a solution within the department, he/she does not
need to be on the ITS communication channel for the web hosting.
What is critically important is that all questions in the inventory be asked of all campus IT
personnel in order to garner stable and defensible statistics for planning and decision making
processes.
A sampling of questions to the main IT support person is listed here. These are by no means
exhaustive, but hopefully will give guidance:
How many people (in terms of FTE) who are not employed by ITS provide IT support in your
department? (Can be partial numbers, i.e. 1.5 FTE)
What roles does each person play (refer to roles above)?
Do you or your support personnel have formal training outside of ITS?
Have you or your support personnel been trained through ITS-supported training modules?
Do some or all faculty support their own computing?
If yes, how many servers/desktops (listed separately) does each manage?
Is management shared by your IT personnel and the faculty?
If yes, what support roles are filled by IT personnel and what roles are filled by the faculty?
Do you know what IT policies exist?
Do you know where to find information about IT policy?
How does ITS communicate to you regarding new projects, updates on existing projects, or
status of critical services on which you depend?
Do you always receive communication about all the services on which you depend from ITS?
How would you like to receive communication from ITS about services, projects, or changes?
How to you or your personnel obtain information on campus services (website, initial hiring
materials, co-workers, word of mouth, etc)?
Are you able to reach out for help from other campus IT personnel (even those outside of ITS)
regarding non-standard problems that may not be documented?
Do you attend IT support events?
Why do you go?
Are they useful?
How could they be changed?
Ideally, other administrative staff would also be interviewed to understand the perception of IT
services, availability, and also to understand the needs of the general faculty, staff and students
as they experience on a day-to-day basis.
Appendix B - Evaluation of Campus Communications Technologies Suggestions

The following are suggestions of different technologies that may be used to more effectively communicate to all campus individuals, including faculty, staff and students. This list is not exhaustive, but may be used to guide decisions.

Currently communication to campus personnel occurs over email via Administrative E-memos from many different groups, Buff Bulletins, and group-specific email lists. The volume of information is vast, and varied, and tends to overwhelm individuals to the point where important messages are ignored. An idea is to deploy a system with 'channels' or an equivalent feature that allows people to elect what communication they wish to receive. Some communication will be mandatory, such as emergency notifications from the campus about events or weather. A sample of technologies that could be pursued to give targeted communication include RSS feeds and email list subscriptions.

Other technologies for user support exist that are already being prototyped by the libraries such as live chat. This allows a user to receive almost immediate help from someone who is able to assist with their specific problem, and could be deployed to multiple departments within ITS (and outside). An example would be if a user had an email issue beyond standard password and access issues, they could request a chat which would be directed to the email escalated support person within ITS to answer the person directly, avoiding a potential long wait from calling 5-Help.