Office of the Associate Vice Chancellor for IT
and Chief Information Officer
University of Colorado, Boulder
90 UCB

Dear Dr. Stanik, Dr. Levine, et al.,

The IT Student Governance Board (ITSGB) represents the CU student body within the CU OIT governance structure. We are writing to express our views in regards to the priorities we feel OIT should focus on in the forthcoming strategic plan report. Our views are based on our recent discussion with Dr. Marin Stanek[1], our surveys of student IT behavior and priorities[2], and our efforts over the previous three years.

We believe there are three major areas where OIT should focus their efforts throughout the next strategic plan period in order to maximize the benefit OIT provides to CU Boulder students:

+ Access to and Affordability of Education Technology
+ Data and Communication Services
+ Privacy and Security of Student Data and Student-Facing Systems

Ensuring students can access and afford the technology necessary to complete their education at CU should be OIT's top priority. This goal encompasses a wide range of potential OIT projects -- from efforts to ensure students can afford to purchase or borrow the laptop computers that have become an unofficial requirement of attending CU[3] to ongoing efforts to ensure technology is accessible by all CU students regardless of background or disability. OIT efforts to obtain discounted or campus-wide licenses for popular (and often required) software also fall under this goal. OIT must work to ensure that no CU student faces an unnecessary disadvantage in their academic progress due to their inability to afford or otherwise access the technology systems necessary (officially or otherwise) for the completion of their coursework.

Beyond ensuring access to and affordability of the technology students require to complete their education, most students[4] view OIT's primary role on campus as a provider of data and communications services (i.e. the Internet). As such OIT, should prioritize providing such data and communication services to students as one of its primary missions. In effect, OIT is the primary (and often only) ISP that many students will use during their time at CU, and OIT should start thinking of themselves as such and acting accordingly. Such actions include ensuring that the campus network is capable of supporting a wide range of student network activities (e.g. streaming video, etc), ensuring that wifi and mobile services are readily available in all areas student frequent, and ensuring that students have adequate and affordable Internet

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[1] February 8th, 2016 ITSGB Meeting
[2] Conducted in both Fall 2014 (~350 Responses) and Fall 2015 (~1000 Responses)
[3] See ITSGB Lab and Laptop Offerings Position Statement, 05/11/2015
[4] In the 2015 survey, over 50% of students ranked network access as their top priority for OIT.

access options both on and off campus[5]. As an ISP, OIT should also strive to uphold the tenets of network neutrality[6], and should not unduly restrict or otherwise limit what kinds of actions students can undertake across the network or what kinds of devices students may connect to the network[7].

OIT's final long-term goal should be ensuring the security and privacy of student data and technological interactions. The University is the custodian of vast swaths of student data from education records to network history and beyond. OIT has a responsibility to ensure this data is maintained in a secure manner that respects each student's privacy rights. Examples of practices OIT should encourage in pursuit of this goal include making sure all student data and communications are encrypted both in transit[8] and at rest[9], minimizing the amount of student data the University stores by ensuring that data is purged as soon as it is no longer strictly necessary to keep, and maintaining industry-standard transparency reports disclosing how and by whom student data is being shared (or how and by whom student data is being requested to be shared)[10]. OIT also has a responsibility to ensure the University (and the technology vendors it contracts with) are following modern security best practices such as offering (or mandating) support for multi-factor authentication, supporting the latest encrypted communication protocols, and otherwise adhering to security and privacy industry standards and best practices.

While OIT has many roles within the University, it is these three goals that we view as OIT's top student-facing priorities for the forthcoming years: ensuring students can afford and access the technology necessary for the completion of their education, providing robust data and communication services to all students wherever they may require them, and maintaining the privacy and security of student data and student-facing systems. The ITSGB welcomes this opportunity to provide these recommendations to OIT as they prepare their strategic plan, and we look forward to working closely with OIT to achieve these goals.

Sincerely,

IT Student Governance Board
University of Colorado, Boulder
Contact: oit-gg-itsgb@colorado.edu

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[5] E.g. by providing off-campus network services to students or partnering with other network providers to ensure the affordability and availability of uncapped, high-speed off-campus Internet option. See similar efforts undertaken at Binghamton University or Marquette.

[6] Such as those laid out in the FCC's 2015 Open Internet Order - even in cases where the University may technically not be obligated to uphold such requirements due to various educational institution exemptions.

[7] See ITSGB WiFi Position Statement, 6/15/14

[8] E.g. By mandating the encryption (via HTTPS) of all official CU websites.

[9] E.g. By manding the use of encrypted hard drives on all servers storing student data and on all workstations or laptops used to access, process, or view student data.

[10] See ITSGB Transparency Report Request Letter, 10/20/15