

2014-15/2018-19 Unit Strategic Plan Review

Unit: Information Technology Services (ITS)

Reviewer: Bean, Guadagnino, Kulkarni, Sherlock, Weinstein, Welshofer, Yin

Date: 10/23/2014

Provost's Guidelines, June 2013	Provost Nick Jones "pillar"	President Eric Barron "major topic"
1. Executive Summary/Highlights		
<p>Information Technology Services (ITS) has made organizational changes and decisions regarding planning for IT at Penn State in response to Core Council recommendations and those are reflected in this plan. ITS and Penn State have challenges ahead in terms of the interrelationship of advancing technology, budgeting, and centralized/decentralized services.</p> <p>ITS addresses all topics requested in the plan. Specifics related to ethical behavior, integrity, diversity, and sustainability are incorporated into each goal. This plan clearly represents an effort by ITS to take planning seriously in a challenging organizational context.</p> <p>The review team appreciated the 'IT at a Glance' shorter version of the plan.</p>		
2. An articulated vision of the unit's future over the next five to ten years.		Excellence
On page 8: "ITS will be an innovative leader and trusted partner in the development and delivery of responsive IT services and support."		
3. A discussion of specific strategies to achieve the vision.		
<p>The goals are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enable Learning: Collaborate with educational support units to research, assess, and support new pedagogical models and educational technologies, enabling growth in residential, online, and hybrid instruction. 2. Support Research and Innovation: Collaborate with research support units to develop innovative IT resources and services that enhance research capabilities, enable appropriate access to data, and maximize storage and processing potential. 3. Modernize Enterprise Systems and Services: Enable data-informed decision making to drive mission-aligned administrative solutions and support enterprise operations. 4. Advance IT Effectiveness: Deliver high-quality, customer-focused IT services that scale to meet diverse needs through consistent, collaborative, and efficient practices and progressive IT staff development. 5. Foster a Collaborative Culture and Community: Ensure that the Values and Foundational Principles of ITS support a healthy community of diverse and supportive staff, making ITS a highly desired place to work and a widely sought unit for collaboration. 		
4. For academic units: A discussion of plans, progress, and initiatives in learning outcomes assessment.	Transforming Education	Student Engagement; Student Career Success & Economic Development

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The focus of ITS’s first goal, to enable leaning (p. 11 – 13) is to collaborate with other units and individuals at the intersection of technology and learning. There are several mentions of learning analytics in this section.

Although learning analytics may be useful for some purposes, it is not clear to reviewers how it would address learning outcomes. It is also unclear how other indicators – such as the number of college and campus initiatives supported by ITS -- support learning outcomes assessment. In general, it is unclear how ITS will support learning outcomes assessment beyond technology that supports teaching and learning in general. There may be specific ways that ITS could support learning outcomes assessment and a conversation with someone on the Assessment Coordinating Committee or the Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence would be useful in exploring any possibilities.

Effective indicator(s)

- Indicators are provided for the three objectives of Goal 1 (p. 11), including implementation of a predictive learning analytics platform.

5. Strategic performance indicators structured around unit level goals.

The plan mentions use of surveys in several areas (p. 20 and Appendix A, a Customer Satisfaction survey; p. 30, an ITS Climate and Diversity Survey; and p. 38, a planning survey on resistance to change). The response rate is only provided for the Customer Service survey (34%). Survey responses should be monitored to ensure that respondents are representative of the population and address validity issues. Most other indicators are tracking numbers for specific services and activities, which can be more valid than surveys.

6. Diversity planning

Valuing and Exploring Our Cultures

Diversity and Demographics; Accessibility

Strengths

- Diversity and inclusion are well represented
- Each of the Challenges is addressed
- Unit followed strategic planning guidelines
- Values & principles statement includes diversity
- Climate & Diversity Team – one of the longest standing such committees in the University
- Plan includes a “Foster a Collaborative Culture and Community” goal.
- Anti-bullying policy
- “ITS Collab” group meets monthly to improve climate.
- Constructive collaborations with other units, particularly OHR
- Decreasing diversity in applicant pools, yet % diverse staff has increased almost 5% in 8 years.
- Diversity included in staff training
- National advertising of jobs
- Budget Exec. personally encourages staff to consider membership on the President’s Equity Commissions.

Opportunities for Growth

- Lack of quantitative data, specific thresholds for success, metrics
- Minimal growth of women in mid-level mgmt. positions
- Efforts to diversify leadership center mainly around gender, yet growth of women in mid-level mgmt. positions is minimal

Effective indicator(s)

- Most of the indicators related to diversity are survey-based

ITS's work related to anti-bullying (p. 28, pp. 69 – 71) may be a best practice that can be expanded to all units. The need for an anti-bullying and non-retaliation policy was an issue that stood out in Penn State's ethics and values survey done in 2013. Also of note is that this work identifies what is not bullying – i.e. constructive criticism. The reviewers wondered whether this work also addresses cyber-bullying.

7. Core Council follow-up.

Core Council follow-up (pp. 25 – 27) indicates recommendations have been or are being addressed.

8. Information on practices that promote integrity and ethical behavior.

Strengths

- Ethics and values concepts are included in diversity language.
- For each goal, the plan addresses how integrity and ethics are promoted by the identified strategies – for example, related to data security. This format is helpful because it is detailed.

Opportunities for Growth

- ITS's concept of diversity (p. 28) includes respect and honesty. The reverse can be more effective, with the concepts of ethics and integrity including diversity.
- An overarching statement more detailed than 'Promoting...' (p. 40) would be more effective. The plan could also specifically address general ethics and integrity, how it relates to individual behavior, and specific actions being taken to further ethics and integrity within the ITS culture.

Effective indicator(s)

- Not provided

9. Discussion of how the unit is contributing toward Penn State's goals for

Stewarding Our Resources

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sustainability.		
<p>For each goal, the plan addresses how sustainability is promoted by the identified strategies – for example, the efficiency and effectiveness of new enterprise systems. This format is helpful because it is detailed.</p> <p>More detailed sustainability planning (pp. 41 – 47) is very specific about what ITS has accomplished, what it wants to do in the future, and how objectives will be accomplished. Sections include teaching, research, and service, and human health and happiness, as well as ITS operations. Items are specific and actionable. The only limitation may be that these actions hinge on creation of a sustainability coordinator position (pp. 41, 43). What if this position is not funded?</p> <p>Effective indicator(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided for each item in future plans 		
10. Correlation of strategic initiatives to budget planning and adjustments.		
<p>The plan notes that the current University budget model does not include 'lifecycle refresh, new projects, or innovation...' (p. 48). Additional information on alternative funding is contained in Appendix F (pp. 83-88).</p>		
	Promoting Our Health	
<p>The plan addresses staff wellness in the Human Health and Happiness section of its Sustainability plan (pp. 45 – 47).</p>		
	Building Our Digital Future	Technology
Additional Observations		
<p>As noted, ITS appears to take planning seriously, and in many respects reviewers saw this as a well-conceived, thoughtful and thorough plan.</p>		