Transformation Plan for UA’s Central IT Division

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Introduction
The University of Arizona’s Chief Information Officer wears two hats when it comes to issues and initiatives related to information technology (IT). One is at a very global level in defining a strategy that truly represents the entire campus. The CIO is expected to represent all aspects of IT, no matter the reporting line, at the institutional executive table, the Board of Regents, and among higher education peers. The other is very specific with direct responsibility for the University’s central IT division, University Information Technology Services (UITS). This involves insuring the institution wide computing tools and environments are available, reliable, secure, and stable, and requires a management approach to operations. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish the two perspectives but is necessary in some instances, like this one.

Positioning Information Technology within the UA Mission
The University of Arizona is complex in both its organization and its technology, requiring that competing information technology needs be carefully evaluated and deployed to ensure the optimal investment of limited resources. The UA possesses a first-class technology infrastructure and staff. There are many examples of excellent IT service delivery and expert project management approaches to IT throughout the university. The challenge is to weave these best practices into a transparent and comprehensive process for reaching university-level IT funding decisions while ensuring a set of common minimal service standards for all units and departments.

The ability to provide advanced information technology is vital for the UA to achieve its teaching, research, and public service mission - to discover, educate, serve, and inspire. Enhancing the current information technology environment with seamless simplicity, robust and secure technology, and greatly expanded capability will strengthen the University’s academic excellence, intellectual creativity, and spirit of community.

Especially in these times, some basic objectives must be met when providing these services:
- Eliminate as much redundancy as is possible and sensible
- Look for solutions, programs and partnerships that are cost effective
- Find ways of utilizing all university IT resources, including Arizona University System (AUS) resources, more efficiently and collaboratively
- Recognize security as a common element within everything we do
- Leverage IT to improve business processes campus-wide
- Provide an excellent working and developmental environment for our staff and partners

University Information Technology Services (UITS) Role
The CIO has submitted a separate proposal for transforming IT at a campus level that encapsulates these objectives. The focus of this plan will be on the central IT division, UITS, whose role is to:

- Enable the institutional mission of instruction, research, and outreach
- Position UA to surpass our peer institutions in the use of technology for teaching, learning, research and overall effectiveness by providing innovative tools, knowledge, and service to the campus community
- Set the highest standards for best practices and standards in information technology services and share that knowledge and skill with the campus community
- Be a center of excellence for information technology vision, knowledge and leadership
- Lead the campus in governing information technology investments and decisions in a collaborative, participative and thoughtful way so that we make optimal investment of limited resources
- Partner with the campus community to make information technology services the most efficient, reliable and accessible to support the mission of the institution
Transforming UITS
In the next 5 years UITS intends to become the IT partner of choice providing innovative expertise, solutions, and strategies for the University of Arizona. By transforming our culture and our work, we intend to be the go-to place for our campus when information technology needs arise.

In support of this vision, UITS is focused on the following strategic goals:
1. Ensure that faculty and students have access to state-of-the-art information technologies and services that have proven value in supporting and enhancing the teaching and learning process.
2. UITS will provide and maintain a community and campus infrastructure that meets recognized standards for excellence.
3. Ensure that the university-wide information technology infrastructure is accessible, dependable, secure, flexible and scalable with services and tools that are integrated and state-of-the-art to meet the teaching, learning, research, and organizational needs of the University of Arizona and the surrounding community.
4. Support and implement the tools and applications needed for a modern, interoperable, responsive, flexible business environment poised for future changes.
5. Adopt a strategic approach to sustainability by managing a portfolio of applications and services in a way that reduces redundancy and provides excellent support.
6. The information assets and technology environment under UITS will be increasingly and effectively secured in a consistent standardized manner without limiting academic and research freedoms.
7. As with any other unit on campus, UITS staff will accept responsibility and accountability to exhibit best security behaviors as individual members of the University community and to serve as model stewards of the University’s information assets.
8. Provide services and support that enhance the capacity of faculty and students to use technologies that facilitate teaching and learning.
10. Continue the commitment to high performance computing and computation, and begin implementing more advanced technologies to ensure that all UA researchers will have access to and are aware of cyberinfrastructure as appropriate to their needs as world-class researchers.
11. Broker strategic alliances with corporate partners and post-secondary institutions that leverage centralized solutions for volume purchases to achieve lower cost and/or better product.
12. Partner with colleges, departments and researchers to leverage existing computing resources or create new resources, provide feedback and survey information and manage our portfolio of services.
13. Create an excellent, values-based, energetic working environment that sets the highest standard for staff achievement and growth with effective communication in all areas.

Achievement of these goals will require and has required a dramatic transformation, beginning with a focus on leadership and values. This work began in earnest on May 5, 2008 with organization alignment to services, full change of leadership in all key areas, the early adoption of ITIL (Information Technology Infrastructure Library- an industry standard for managing information technology (IT) infrastructure, development, and operations) and FISH! Philosophy as a customer service model.

This transition will take time and includes:
- Building a new work, accountability and service culture based on values
- Transforming the way we do work by implementing industry standard best practices and benchmarks for excellence in all areas of information technology
- Creating a service atmosphere of collaboration and excellence
- Creating a work force that is accomplished, proud of their role in the mission of the University and excited about their work and workplace
- Eliminating redundant functions and realigning resources (people and dollars) to strategic priorities, which for now are:
  - Replacing the institution’s administrative systems (Mosaic)
• Growing and stabilizing the core infrastructure, network and server operations
• Securing information assets
• Expanding the support model for increased online learning
• Governing our priorities and projects through community involvement and input

Very specifically, UITS has several early examples of transformation success:
• Help desk functions were consolidated and expanded allowing for a reduction in personnel
• Centralized payroll and business management functions into Business Services group reducing the need for additional administrative personnel
• Restructured and downsized the leadership structure
• More use of students rather than full-time personnel
• Consolidating productions services and operations center
• In January 2003, UITS began expanding several key services on a fee-based funding model. These services are still offered today:
  o Server co-location, management and backup services
  o Desktop support
  o Web design and development
  o Student lab management
• Employee and customer survey development is underway to determine where we are now and what the direction should be in the future.

Creating Efficiencies
Although progress has been made in a radical transformation, more will be done to move forward in creating efficiencies.
• As we move through the implementation process to replace the institution’s administrative applications, a new operations and support structure will emerge and greatly impact how we provide this support today. New support procedures will be required and the support personnel will need to be skilled with the latest and greatest programming and systems information. The new model is still unclear but small signs are starting to appear as we make progress. This will truly be one of our biggest areas of transformation.
• Student email will be outsourced. The students are very eager to take advantage of the more modern web-based email systems such as Google and Microsoft. Not only will this save us a little bit of operations dollars but the students will have a much larger suite of integrated tools than we can provide. Discussions have already begun with the ASUA, GPSC and ITSAB councils to select the desired product.
• We will explore other outsourcing options as well, such as web development, server and database hosting arrangements, and wireless system support. In the last two years, it has been exceedingly difficult to attract good-quality technical personnel. Looking for outside sources is one way to alleviate this issue. The potential savings, if any, are yet to be identified. If these options pan out, the scope of potential resources will expand tremendously and challenge our traditional in-house approach to provisioning IT support.
• The Learning Technologies Center (LTC) and Research Computing will be negatively impacted by a 15% reduction in TRIF funding. This is in addition to the anticipated cuts in state funding. TRIF is a source of funding for several positions in LTC. In parallel, we anticipate tremendous growth in online courses, thus increased use of D2L and more support for faculty. It is unclear at this point how this will be addressed. TRIF is also a primary source of funds for the maintenance of the High Performance Computing System. It is unwise to reduce vendor support, so it may be necessary to reduce personnel support instead. Given the newness of the situation, the analysis has only just begun. One idea is to rely more heavily on the distributed departmental resources that currently exist for hands-on faculty support both in the classroom and in the lab.
• All resources will continue to be examined and positioned to support our top priorities.