Assessment Review of SSU Information Technology Services
May 2018
**Context**

With new leadership and strategic opportunities to leverage technology to enable the Chancellor’s GI 2025 initiative this is an opportune time for Sonoma State University (SSU) to step back and review how information technology is supporting the campus. In July 2017, Lisa Vollendorf, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Chief Academic Officer, and Stan Nosek, the interim Vice President for Administration and Finance and CFO at the time, requested support from the CSU Chancellor’s Office to conduct a high-level review of information technology services and operations.

The objective of this review was for Sonoma State leadership to understand the key issue areas and opportunities with IT operations and services and to develop recommendations for improvement. To complete this work a team comprised of external consultants, Mary Beth Baker and Phil Goldstein, worked in collaboration with a CSU Review Team comprised of IT professionals from both the Chancellor’s Office and the CSU campuses (Hilary Baker, Jean-Pierre Bayard, Michel Davidoff, and Gerry Hanley). The team reviewed background materials provided by the interim CIO and spent two days (December 12-13, 2017) on campus interviewing key stakeholders including faculty, administrative leaders and staff as well as IT staff.

The following report provides a summary of our observations and recommendations for action over the next six months. The report has three components:

**A. Summary of Issues**

Issues and Action Steps are classified into seven categories:

1. IT Leadership and Decision Making
2. Alignment of IT Services to Campus Needs
3. Information Security and Business Continuity
4. Organization Structure and Service Culture
5. Project Execution
6. Internal Processes

**B. Final Summary**
A. Summary of Issues

It should be noted that while the preponderance of the issues identified below are significant, the groups interviewed observed that the IT organization is in need of strong leadership and direction. Resolution of these issues will involve significant organizational and cultural change. The ability to transform the current IT organization into a high-performing service organization that operates in partnership with the University will require considerable time, strong leadership, targeted investments, proactive communications with the University community, and visible engagement on the part of the University executive leadership.

1. IT Leadership and Decision Making
   • IT Leadership has the opportunity to take proactive steps to understand campus academic and administrative departments’ needs as a mechanism to help departments discover ways in which to modernize and solve business process issues and improve their ability to deliver service.
   • The span of leadership responsibilities and titles given to the direct reports of the CIO is atypical of an IT organization of this size. There is an opportunity to further develop the staff and the management team to better support project management, professional development over time, and to create a unified, positive organizational culture that is receptive to change.
   • The campus needs to develop a transparent institutional IT governance process and advisory group for identifying and prioritizing technology projects that enables decisions to be made at the appropriate level of leadership. This will require a cultural shift by which technology projects no longer are prioritized by the IT Team, but instead through a clear decision-making process. It also will enable faculty and staff to be consulted appropriately about their needs and for goals to be set in alignment with the campus priorities and end-user needs.

2. Alignment of Services to Campus Needs
   • The IT division and campus leadership need to work in partnership to ensure IT services and solutions are prioritized and delivered in alignment with the University mission and directions.
   • IT needs to engage in a proactive consultative process to understand end user needs and to help evaluate possible technology solutions. The lack of such consultation and a clear decision-making process results in end users purchasing IT applications, implementing, and in some instances, maintaining the solutions independent of input from IT. Project approval and management processes need to be built out more effectively to ensure that major projects (such as OnBase or addressing adequacy of on-premise vs. cloud-based services) can be supported both fiscally and with the appropriate human resources over time.
   • Though many people noted that IT help desk support is one of IT’s bright spots, the scope, reliability, and management of support services is inconsistent. Constituents reported that the support staff assigned to their areas provided varied scopes of support and quality of customer service.
   • Academic technology overall needs better coordination and support.

3. Information Security and Business Continuity
   • Clearer pathways and processes need to be created to ensure strong practices and assessments regarding information security, business continuity, and the Accessibility Technology Initiative (ATI). The campus needs to create, evaluate, and implement strong business continuity and IT disaster recovery capabilities to ensure they are aligned with campus needs and priorities. The current identity management solution needs to be
assessed to ensure that the campus has a solution that meets its needs (the current system is a custom developed application managed by one individual and without supporting documentation).

4. Organization Structure and Service Culture

• The IT organization needs to be supported to work towards becoming a team of people with shared values, unifying purpose, a sense of a service culture, and a clearly defined set of roles and responsibilities. This will involve creating a less fragmented structure to develop services and to support critical areas of IT. It also may involve more cross-training and dedicated support for some areas of campus that lack support (such as multi-media in classes or for events).

• The end-user perception of IT is that it operates within a culture of “No”. As a result, end user departments are beginning to hire their own IT staff or seek consultancies in order to create their own local support for the delivery of IT solutions and services (e.g., digital signage in Advancement, Wi-Fi in the Library, website conversion). In so doing, departments are creating islands of IT support that are disconnected from central IT and potentially shifting the IT service delivery model from a centralized to a decentralized IT model. For a campus of this size this is not a sustainable model and is one that will impede progress toward campus graduation initiatives.

5. Project Execution

• IT needs a basic project management process. This will allow end-user departments to submit projects. The process needs to be supported by formal tools to track and manage the existing project portfolio. Currently, multiple projects (e.g., OnBase, conversion of campus web pages from Dreamweaver to Drupal, completion of the VoIP phone systems, and EAB) are high priority, yet it is not clear that they have been proactively planned, resourced, or managed in general nor in partnership with the campus end users.

6. Internal IT Processes

• Internally, the IT organization needs to develop well-defined processes for IT incident management and IT change management. For example, IT is operating without an enterprise-level ticketing system that would enable IT to report on its tickets, and provide ticket submitters online update on the status of their requests. Similarly, the process to request to purchase software is overly complex and doesn’t provide an opportunity for IT to understand the requestor’s true need or to steer them towards available solutions.

• Improved processes and access rights to systems would enable the help desk to resolve more issues at the time the constituent calls or walks in. Additionally self-service support tools for frequently needed support such as password resets are missing.

B. FINAL SUMMARY

This assessment aims to provide an overview of the findings from the team review. IT and campus leadership can use this assessment to begin to move the organization forward and to partner with all constituents and stakeholders to build a stronger IT organization at SSU.