

July 15, 2005

To: Chancellor Sorensen

Re: Ad Hoc Task Force Final Report

At the beginning of the Fall, 2004 semester you convened an Ad Hoc Task Force to examine how well IT support levels aligned with campus needs. The following is the final report addressing the Ad Hoc Task Force's four charges.

Charge #1: Review the needs of the laptop program

The Ad Hoc Task Force requested that BPA conduct a survey of faculty and staff to determine if current IT support levels met the needs of the laptop program at full deployment and to identify any anticipated gaps. The Ad Hoc Task Force and BPA developed the survey and BPA collected and reported responses to the survey (see Attachment A).

A majority of faculty and staff expressed satisfaction with the IT support afforded the laptop program and offered comments that the IT infrastructure has taken great strides forward in the last few years. Several constructive comments were made toward improving IT support and creating a more reliable digital environment.

A number of needs were identified, as well. Although the committee was not charged with developing solutions to these needs, some proposed solutions are identified in italics:

- Written comments for improving all areas of technical support identified the need for additional technicians and responsive (timely) IT support services. *The task force recommends that the IT department align its workload with the academic calendar. The task force further recommends that the IT department consider adding additional people (either students or outside vendors) on a short-term basis during the times of the year when additional help is needed, such as the start of the academic year.*
- Written comments for improving technical support for university services/support revealed the need to address the programming process. Comments reflected concern about the responsiveness of the rating-and-queuing system and, thus, about the timeliness of response to programming requests. *The task force recommends that a more formal process of prioritizing IT work requests be developed, that priorities be communicated more clearly, and that programming services be completed on a more timely basis.*

- Written comments for improving the technical support for Teaching and Learning revealed the need to eliminate one of the two course management systems (e-Scholar or D2L). Faculty and staff are unhappy with having two systems. There was no consensus as to which of the two systems was better. *The task force recommends that UW-Stout collect additional information to determine which of the two systems is more beneficial to teaching and learning, and consider eliminating the one that is least beneficial. This data collection should include input from instructors teaching online courses.*
- Written comments for improving all areas of technical support identified the need for routine computer maintenance checks, to ensure that the computers are up-to-date with the latest software and are in working order. *The task force recommends that Technology and Information Services (TIS) work with the departments to establish a routine maintenance schedule.*
- A majority (75%) of the faculty and staff are satisfied with the wireless support in their classroom. However, 25% report that wireless support in the classroom does not meet their needs. Additionally, some faculty and staff identified specific buildings and rooms where wireless connectivity was a problem. *The task force recommends that a plan be developed to improve wireless connectivity in each building/room that was identified as problematic.*
- *Although not specifically addressed in the survey, the task force also recommends that IT priorities and workload be better aligned with instructional and student learning needs. The task force also recommends that a TIS Governing Board, with representation of user groups across the administrative and academic divisions, be created to oversee TIS operations. In addition, the task force recommends that the new CIO participates regularly with Provost's Council.*

Additional information about these needs, as well as information about areas that have been identified as strengths can be found in the survey report:

<http://www.uwstout.edu/bpa/ir/survey%20results/digital05.pdf>

<p>Charge #2: Identify the specialized labs and the service needs of those labs</p>
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The Ad Hoc Task Force requested that BPA conduct a survey of faculty and staff to determine if current IT support levels met the needs of the specialized computing labs and to identify any gaps. The Ad Hoc Task Force and BPA developed the survey and BPA collected and reported responses to the survey (a list of specialized computer labs surveyed can be found in Attachment B). Based on survey responses (see Attachment C), the following service needs have been identified:

- Most lab supervisors were satisfied with the response time of the technicians when they needed to call for support regarding equipment or software in the lab. However, 37% of the supervisors indicated that it took 2 or more days for a technician to respond.

- Although nearly all lab supervisors agree that the specialized labs meet their needs, most indicated that the labs should not be replaced with docking stations for laptop computers. *The task force recommends that the specialized labs continue to be maintained as non-laptop labs, except in instances where the department/lab supervisor agrees that converting the lab to a laptop lab would better meet student learning needs.*

Additional information about these needs, as well as information about areas that have been identified as strengths can be found in the survey report:

<http://www.uwstout.edu/bpa/ir/survey%20results/labsurv05.pdf>

It should also be noted that, in both surveys, there were areas where faculty and staff reported high levels of satisfaction with technical support and/or with the specialized labs. They are not highlighted in this report because the charge to the committee was to identify the needs.

Charge #3: Assess technical support: IT support, technicians in programs, departments, and divisions not in IT

Before his retirement, Joe Brown provided the task force a breakdown of TIS and a scope of work for TIS. The task force concluded that more human resources were needed to address the scope of IT support. The task force still agrees that the IT human resources dedicated to campus support are stretched considerably and assistance in some areas is required to meet the IT demand. However, given information provided by the surveys referenced above and from the recent consultants' review of TIS, the task force feels that the university and new CIO have a window of opportunity to do a complete organizational assessment of IT support areas. This assessment could review all current IT services to the campus, audit all processes and responsibilities, identify redundant systems and operations, identify opportunities to internally reallocate TIS human resources to high priority IT support needs, and develop a complete long range human resources support plan as part of a comprehensive IT support plan. Such an assessment could address the following issues:

- Prioritization of work
- Communication of work priorities and timelines
- Duplication of responsibilities
- Inventory of human resources
- Outsourcing service overload and program development
- Operational process improvements
- Current workload assessment
- Elimination of low priority services
- Consolidation of services
- Implementation of internal service
- Agreements with stakeholders

Charge #4: Create a model: determine if there should be a model adopted based on appropriate metrics that trigger an assessment or need for more technical support

The Ad Hoc Task Force reviewed data from Educause Core Data Services, an IT support benchmarking consortium. This data review suggested the need for additional IT support levels. However, data provided by the surveys referenced earlier (in Charges #1 and #2 above) suggests areas of redundant services that, if eliminated, would provide staffing flexibilities that could improve IT support levels in key areas.

As indicated in the response to Charge # 3 above, the Ad Hoc Task Force feels that an assessment of IT support priorities is needed prior to creating an IT human resource allocation model. As supported by the survey responses, these priorities should be established with significant input from the academic division. The Ad Hoc Task Force recommends that the new CIO participates regularly in Provost's Council meetings and consider creating a governing board composed of stakeholders from across the university.

The Ad Hoc Task Force would be happy to respond to any questions that you might have concerning its recommendations above.

Respectfully,

Ad Hoc Task Force Members

Joe Brown	John Murphy
Mike Galloy	Phil Schwarz
Pinckney Hall	Bob Sedlak
Jane Henderson	Nicholle Stone
Judy Jax	Doug Wahl
Vi Jones	Meridith Wentz
Joe Krier	John Wesolek
Bob Meyer	

Attachment A <http://www.uwstout.edu/bpa/ir/survey%20results/digital05.pdf>

Attachment B



list of labs.xls (22 KB)

Attachment C <http://www.uwstout.edu/bpa/ir/survey%20results/labsurv05.pdf>

Executive Summary of Task Force Recommendations

- 1) Align TIS workload with the academic calendar. Consider adding people or outsourcing work on a short term basis during times of the year when additional help is needed such as the start of the academic year.
- 2) Create a more formal and visible process of prioritizing TIS work and communicating work priorities. This process must assure more timely completion of TIS work (including programming services).
- 3) Collect additional information about D2L and e-Scholar and eliminate one of these two systems. Include online instructor input when collecting data regarding these two systems. Reassign freed up staff to high priority IT support needs.
- 4) Establish a routine maintenance schedule for campus computing resources. TIS should work with departments to create this schedule.
- 5) Develop a plan to improve wireless connectivity where it is problematic.
- 6) Create a TIS Governing Board with user group representation to oversee TIS operations.
- 7) Engage the new CIO with Provost's Council on a regular basis.
- 8) Maintain specialized computing labs as non-laptop labs except in instances where the department/lab supervisor agrees that converting a lab better meets student learning needs.
- 9) Conduct an assessment of TIS services and operations that addresses the following:
 - Prioritization of work
 - Communication of work priorities and timelines
 - Duplication of responsibilities
 - Inventory of human resources
 - Outsourcing service overload and program development
 - Operational process improvements
 - Current workload assessment
 - Elimination of low priority services
 - Consolidation of services
 - Implementation of internal service
 - Agreements with stakeholders
- 10) Consider adding additional staff, only after consolidating IT support staff as determined by the assessment of TIS referred to in the previous recommendation.