Strategic Plan: July 2009 – June 2012

Technology Services

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Introduction

Technology services at Puget Sound have changed considerably since our 2006/2007 strategic plan. We have a new name, a few new faces, and are in the process of redefining who we are, where we want to go, and how we are going to get there. Our strategic plan offers a roadmap to our redefinition, a plan describing our vision and how we will make our vision reality. The mission and values below form the foundation to our plan, which is then shaped by our current situation and external factors. These forces, trends, resources, and collaborative relationships contribute to our vision, which is then elaborated in detail, followed by our strategies and assessment.

Mission

Technology Services leads, supports, and facilitates the Puget Sound community's use of current and evolving technology in accordance with the College mission and strategic goals. We encourage innovation and the responsible use of our resources and provide secure and effective technology solutions.

Values

We believe the following values are key to our success over the next three years. Technology Services (TS) staff are expected to demonstrate these values in their relationships, interactions, and ongoing work.

- Competency
  
  *All staff are expected to demonstrate the following skills throughout their daily work:*
  - Communication: articulate, respectful, and professional written and verbal communication.
  - Teamwork: able to interact productively with colleagues to achieve goals.
  - Expertise: technological expertise specific to particular work area; general technical knowledge overall; current with advancements in your specific position and aware of developments in the field as a whole.
  - Integrity: be honest, dependable, accept responsibility for your actions and commitments; develop abilities in areas of challenge.

- Openness
  - Prefer solutions that support open standards and interoperability
  - Ensure transparency of process: be open, share your work, and maintain records and documentation for future reference.
  - Facilitate the sharing of ideas, content, feedback, and access to knowledge and resources: continually seek improvement by encouraging feedback and suggestions.
  - Develop tools, applications, and approaches that foster openness: don’t horde work or information. Constantly seek ways to improve sharing of information and ideas.
Community-focused
  o Develop services in response to community needs and goals. Actions should be directed towards satisfying the needs and goals of current and future community members.
  o Facilitate community use of technology: being accessible and “user friendly” are important components of excellent service.
  o Seek feedback on our services and adjust in response: clearly associate changes with customer feedback.

Forward-thinking
  o Anticipate future consequences and trends in order to continue offering high-quality technology services.
  o Understand the difference between the immediate and the important; between the tactical and the strategic, and balance work appropriately.
  o Act with awareness of service costs and benefits; seek improvements that reduce costs and/or improve services.

Current Situation

 Appropriately, our vision and strategic plan are influenced by several external factors and trends. In addition, several key resources and collaborators (both on and off campus) influence our current situation. In this section we describe the influences that have shaped our vision and strategies.

External factors

Economic and Demographic Trends

Higher education faces increasing pressures to keep costs as low as possible in the face of negative economic news and uncertain economic changes. In addition, anticipated demographic declines in the high-school aged population means a potentially smaller pool of entering students and more competition for qualified prospective students.

As competition increases, the quality and availability of campus technology can serve as an important deciding factor in college selection. Many students have grown up with ubiquitous, on-demand computing and bring heightened expectations for computing services and facilities with them to campus. Technology has become an important component of a school’s overall presentation and appeal to prospective students.

Technology resources are also important in preparing students for lifelong success, for community and workplace engagement increasingly relies on technology skills as well as traditional liberal arts skills in communication and critical thinking. Technology departments will play a key role in providing support services to accomplish these goals.
Technology Trends
As commercial computing services have evolved to “any time, anywhere, any device” service models, campus technology services face these same expectations from our customers. Universities and colleges around the world are having difficulty meeting these increased expectations.

Mobile devices contribute to ubiquitous computing expectations, and these expectations will only rise as mobile devices are upgraded and improved. “Web 2.0” or social media software use (like Facebook, Twitter, and others) is already a major trend, and will be recombined (or “mashed up”) with other software and hardware combinations. All of these trends result in a complex landscape of software, hardware and service trends.

For students today, communication is in transition. Using mobile devices to receive course notices, assignments and reading postings will become more convenient for students and will enhance the overall student experience.

Students’ former experiences with technology in school shape their expectations for technology in education and should inform current practices on higher education campuses. These technologies would include the use of virtual portfolios to supplement standard academic assessments as well as various technological tools to support learning, social, and professional activities.

Higher Education Trends
Several trends in universities and colleges related to technology are evolving. These include trends related to issues of governance and the importance of collaboration, as well as trends which directly impact the academic mission: teaching, learning and scholarly activities.

Technology has grown from an administrative support service to supporting every component of campus life and is central to the healthy and successful functioning of academic and administrative work. As a result, CTO/CIO’s are increasingly serving as key voices in education governance and planning to ensure the alignment of technology with institutional goals and resources.

Teaching, learning and scholarly activities have also been impacted by ubiquitous computing. Students and faculty have come to expect anytime/anywhere access to online resources, and many disciplines have evolved vital technology specific to their fields. In an attempt to meet these growing teaching and learning needs, many technology units are finding ways to allocate more resources to their instructional technology units. The instructional technology units are thus being shifted to the center of technology efforts on campuses to more directly support the teaching and learning mission. Integration of technology in teaching and learning will continue to evolve as a necessary component for educating the 21st century learner.

While students demand the convenience of anytime/anywhere access to online resources, they strongly value face-to-face contact and learning. Learning spaces, such as classrooms and computer labs, will continue to grow in their sophistication and ability to support interactive learning, such as game-based learning, simulations, and the visual analysis of information.
Resources and Collaborators

While there are many challenges in providing technology services, especially in these times, there are several strengthening influences on our campus. TS staff have shown a degree of investment in their jobs which provides a strong foundation to build upon. Along with many facilities, the college website is also being “upgraded” and various social media and multimedia opportunities are being explored. TS is partnering with several on-campus groups in these efforts, most notably the Library, Communications, and Facilities departments. Puget Sound’s administration is very supportive of changes within TS and of technology generally.

Due to increased demand and limited resources, technology units all over the world are seeking creative ways to collaborate. Leveraging partnerships and increasing collaboration with other higher education institutions and/or other consortia to share resources is becoming crucial to providing services with limited resources. Examples include higher education collaborations via EDUCAUSE, the National Institute for Technology in Liberal Education (NITLE), and other organizations, Project Bamboo (digital Humanities collaborative community), the Northwest Academic Computing Consortium (NWACC), the Washington State Educational Technology group, as well as one-to-one collaborations with colleagues in other schools.

Vision Statement

Today’s academic endeavor is becoming more collaborative and interactive, and, given the above economic and demographic factors, we anticipate increasing emphasis on assessment and accountability. Technology has and will continue to support these goals through the use of online collaboration tools, learning management systems, and appropriate enterprise information systems. Thus, we believe academic support, enterprise information, and the TS culture will require strategic focus for TS over the next three years.

Academic Support

The advent of plentiful network bandwidth, mobile devices that rival the power and versatility of laptop computers, and the increase in flexible Internet-based tools all support an environment of constant, lifelong learning. This makes possible a variety of new and exciting interactions between members of the academic community. Faculty will expect TS to help them navigate the many available tools and decide which ones best enhance the learning and research experience. An “instructional design” role will assume increasing importance for us, as will knowledge of discipline-specific technologies. We will also need to support and develop content for mobile devices and design a conceptual "platform" flexible enough to accommodate many different instructional and research needs.

Enterprise Information

Information is the lifeblood of any organization’s decision-making process. Until now, our approach to data and analysis has been largely transactional and supportive of more routine administrative functions. This serves the college well in an operational sense but is less successful in supporting efforts at planning and prediction. TS must move our student information and financial systems into a more analytic reality. This should allow the college to apply more "business intelligence" to processes, enabling us to make better decisions,
assess progress, and chart our future course.

**TS Culture**
We envision transforming TS into a more collaborative, trust-based, and open culture in support of the academic and administrative mission. We envision working to be more community-focused, educating and supporting the campus community by developing and nurturing partnerships and by modeling a culture of collaboration and communication. This culture will provide the foundation for an increasingly energetic, innovative, and rewarding environment. We hope to contribute a key voice in college governance and planning, have an increasingly positive impact on the academic experience, and be proactive in anticipating needs in order to provide and promote appropriate solutions.

**Our Strategies and Assessment**
We believe three primary strategies will help us achieve the above vision given our current and anticipated environment. Increasing our efficiency, competitiveness, and technological agility will enable us to provide resources for increasing academic support, to sustain existing resources, and to develop the culture we feel is necessary for our continued success. A description of each strategy appears below, followed by possible tactics and assessment measures.

1. **We believe improving efficiency and effectiveness are essential components to TS success.** It will be easiest for us to achieve our vision for academic support if we can reallocate resources gained through efficiency measures.

   **Possible tactics include:**
   - Reviewing service and administration activities to continuously improve efficiency, quality, and effectiveness
   - Implementing innovative solutions to improve campus services (e-mail, storage, disaster recovery, web hosting, academic projects)
   - Supporting TS and campus sustainability and environmental efficiency efforts.

   **Assessment measures:** The following metrics could be applied to the tactics associated with this strategy: service cost comparisons before and after; customer satisfaction surveys before and after; sustainability/waste reduction measurements

2. **We believe Puget Sound will experience more competition for students and that excellence in enterprise information systems will be necessary to sustain our current level of success.** In addition to supporting Puget Sound's goals to recruit and retain students successfully, TS must also be prepared to develop new ways to create, report, and share information as appropriate between all members of our community, including alumni, parents, trustees, and friends. Possible tactics include:

   - Reviewing strategies and practices regarding institutional information systems, particularly student information. What are our competitors doing? What is our response?
   - What services are our peer and "next step" schools providing? What is our response?
• What facilities are our peer and "next step" schools providing? What is our response?
• Explore opportunities for innovation in the above which would put Puget Sound at an advantage.

Assessment measures: we will describe our research, responses, and program development to illustrate how we are contributing to Puget Sound's competitive edge.

3. In the past, TS has been challenged to adopt technologies with agility and ease, and our organizational culture reflects this frustration. Change is constant, and so finding new ways to operate is crucial if we are to achieve our mission. Possible tactics include:

• Develop a practice of assessing new technologies to determine value to Puget Sound.
• Develop a practice of assessing current and future community needs to determine relevance of new technologies.
• Develop a culture where time spent in research and discovery is viewed as an important component to organizational, team, and individual success.

Assessment measures: each staff member should be able to describe the technological changes in his/her area of expertise and should be able to describe how his/her team is responding; TS teams should be able to describe future customer needs as well as unmet current needs.

Conclusion

Technology has become integral in every area of life, and TS is excited about many new technologies and the possibilities they suggest for Puget Sound. We want to support Puget Sound in ways big and small, from regular business needs to new and interesting applications that can distinguish us from our competitors. We hope that in 2012 we will reflect on our work and be pleased with the changes we’ve fostered, supported, and advanced.

Resources

The following resources were particularly useful in creating this document.