BACK TO THE FUTURE

Meeting MPC's Technology Needs
June 2012

Introduction

Over the last several months, MPC has engaged in a series of conversations about the college's technology needs. Due to a number of technological and curriculum changes, the technology needs have changed requiring a re-examination of our current resources and organization. Recently, the Dean of Technology announced her retirement in August adding further urgency to this discussion. Despite this series of conversations, a consensus on how to address these issues has not developed. Given the need to be prepared to appropriately support our technology needs in Fall 2012, I have developed a proposal to meet MPC's technology needs.

Back to the Future

Sometimes we need to step back and re-examine where we have been in order to determine where we should go. I feel our current technology situation requires this re-examination. In the early 2000s, MPC received a Title III grant which funded a new function and administrative position, the Associate Dean, Instructional Technology and Development. This position reported to Academic Affairs. This position had responsibility for the vision and leadership of the Center for Instructional Development; coordinated and implemented training for faculty and staff in applications of technology in instructional and service programs; facilitated the use of technology for the presentation of curriculum through distance education, web-based instruction, and internet activities within the classroom; and worked cooperatively with the Director of Information Systems.

Overall, this structure was considered quite successful, but institutional conditions changed causing shifts in administrative assignments. In 2006, the Director of Information Systems passed away leaving a leadership void in that area. In response, this position was changed to become the Dean of Technology with responsibility for the duties above plus oversight of Information Systems. In addition to this organizational change, several other technology-related influences impacted the college. The scope of distance education has expanded dramatically requiring greater support. The use of web-based instruction and other technology in the classroom has become common place in face-to-face classes in all disciplines. The expectations of our students and the public regarding technological access have grown tremendously. All these factors have occurred during a time when the growing responsibilities of the original Associate Dean position have negatively impacted the amount of time and resources to address them.

Other factors have influenced the Information Systems department. During this time, the college has continued an aggressive construction schedule requiring significant attention from our technical staff. We have replaced aging networks with new servers. We have shifted to a new student information system. And, we have experienced a significant increase in accountability reports requiring data analysis. All these factors have taken a great deal of focus.

The end result is that the demands for service have increased in all areas while the resources to address them have diminished. Many faculty members feel that instructional technology support is inadequate for the current demands. Overall, faith in our current staffing structure has eroded.

Proposal

Based on analysis of these factors, I no longer believe that our current structure can adequately support our growing technology needs. Throughout the spring term, discussion of these challenges has continued, and I had hoped that a clear consensus on how to proceed would have resulted from our governance process. However, that did not occur, and the challenges have continued. In the meantime, distance education has become an increasingly important part of our overall FTES generation, now accounting for over 7% of the total and increasing at an annual rate of 1%. Our distance education courses are often the first to fill each term, and Academic Affairs is concerned that the current structure is not capable of sustaining this growth. Therefore, I recommend that we return to the original staffing structure implemented during the Title III grant: an Associate Dean reporting to Academic Affairs specifically responsible for instructional technology and distance education and a Director of Information Systems reporting to Administrative Services responsible for institutional computing. The core job descriptions for these positions already exist. Though we need to update them to reflect current language and situations, these are essentially replacement positions.

The funding for these positions will be derived through the reallocation of existing resources currently funding the Dean of Technology position and unallocated resources available through elimination of other management positions earlier this academic year. The amount required from the management savings is approximately $100,000 - $125,000, which does not exhaust those savings.

I remind you that when the management reorganization in Facilities was presented to College Council earlier in the year, the district clearly indicated the intention to use salary savings to address institutional needs. This proposal addresses one of our most pressing institutional needs.

Timing

In order to be prepared to address the college's technology needs during Fall 2012, I propose that this recommendation be taken to the Governing Board at the June 27, 2012 meeting and searches begin immediately thereafter. When the faculty returns in August, selection committees can be formed per our regular governance process and screening can begin right away. It is possible that hiring recommendations can be considered by the Board in September or early October.

However, if we wait until fall to initiate this process, we are accepting that our current challenged technology support and limited support for distance education will continue into the spring 2013 term. I believe that option is unacceptable. I invite College Council's recommendation on how to proceed.