Davis Division Academic Senate

Request for Consultation Responses

Information Technology Shared Service Center Concept (PPM 200-45)

January 13, 2011

In accordance with Policy and Procedure Manual 200-45 the Davis Division has been asked to participate in a conceptual review of an Information Technology Service Center. If additional information is desired, the request includes a web site where more information may be obtained.
Dear Professor Powell,

The L&S Executive Committee has discussed the “Case Management Core Technology for the OE IT Shared Service Center” conceptual proposal and has the following comments:

- The report should articulate more clearly exactly what is being proposed, with less technical jargon.

- More information on the budgetary ramifications, responsibility for oversight, the effects on different groups of campus users, and the pros and cons of each option need to be presented before substantive recommendations can be made.

- Concern was expressed regarding 1) potential confidentiality issues associated with outsourcing such information via "cloud"-based methodologies, 2) the technical ability to create the necessary software "on premises", and 3) how effective customer care can be done if the systems aren’t housed or managed locally.

Sincerely,

Patricia C. Boeshaar, Chair
Executive Committee
College of Letters and Science
Elections, Rules & Jurisdiction

January 3, 2011 2:30 PM

No response at this time.
Faculty Welfare

January 11, 2011 4:02 PM

The Faculty Welfare Committee considered this document in our November 22, 2010, Division meeting and subsequently contacted Mr. Barrett for clarification. It was not clear what meaningful input we could present given the general nature of the document and the fact that several solutions appear to be chosen at this time. Thus, the Committee has chosen not to respond beyond this comment.
The Information Technology Committee has reviewed Information Technology Shared Service Center Concept (PPM 200-45) and has the following response.

The conceptual review document paints a very generalized picture of what might be gained by an ITSM solution for UC Davis. It doesn't really establish in any detail the limitations of the current setup. The fact that the systems we are using are "generally thought to be outdated" and "therefore we seek a new better system", does not make the case well. Claims such as 'generally thought to be outdated' seem vague and unsupported. This committee would feel better in knowing more specifics as to what the flaws in the current system are.

Also, the case is not really made in this document that adopting this system will generate net cost savings. We need to be thinking, in every situation that would involve expenditure, "Do we really NEED this?" If one of the primary goals of a shared service center is to save money, we would like to see some more specifics on how this is going to happen with reference to the costs of the existing setup. No actual cost reductions are identified, nor are there identified cost savings compared to the cost of implementation.

In Summary, a more concrete proposal, identifying actual problems to be solved and costs to be reduced would be very helpful. If the systems we have are outdated yet get the job done to everyone's satisfaction, we don't need something better . . . unless it would generate clearly identified cost savings.
Planning & Budget
January 11, 2011 1:31 PM

CPB has reviewed the PPM 200-45 Request for the Information Technology Shared Service Center. Fundamentally, CPB suggests that all Organizational Excellence/Shared Service Center project requests originate with the affected units to ensure optimum performance in conjunction with financial and operational efficiency. CPB has not yet seen evidence that centralization provides significant cost savings. Individual departments and centers have special needs, and over the course of time have optimized support to address those needs. Therefore, consolidation should be at the request of individual units, not imposed from above. In addition, the creation of a Shared Service Center (SSC) should never have a negative effect on the campus’s educational missions, including teaching and research.

The following administrative units will be affected by the proposed Organizational Excellence/Shared Service Center project. The effects on these units will in turn have a significant impact on Academic Senate authority over curriculum and admissions.

- Administrative and Resource Management: Provides data necessary for the Senate to conduct annual undergraduate program reviews. Additionally, there should be consultation regarding the impact of consolidation on budgetary matters with the Academic Senate Committee on Planning and Budget (CPB) and other Senate committees as needed.

- Information and Educational Technology: The Academic Senate has authority over course approval and curriculum, and therefore has authority over the course approval system and systems used by the Admissions Office.

- Offices of the Chancellor and Provost: Centralizing would have a large and possibly detrimental effect on the academic personnel process and might also affect the functions and organization of the Academic Senate Office.

- Student Affairs: There could be a detrimental influence on courses and curriculum, transcript notation, internships, advising, degrees, and admissions and enrollment.

- University Relations: Problems might be created for faculty who interact with government officials, including the state legislature, and for gift administration, including faculty endowments.

The proposal states that the “goal of the IT SSC is to provide the highest quality customer service at the lowest possible cost.” Faculty members on campus feel that there have been too many programs put into place with the goal of “saving money” that have, in turn, lowered educational effectiveness and increased dependence on faculty input of data, thereby increasing faculty workload and costs associated with administrative tasks. CPB does not find it acceptable to sacrifice quality and faculty time and salaries to save money on administrative salaries. Reducing costs should not be the first priority when implementing a new IT system on campus. Before making decisions on centralization vs. decentralization for units on campus, evidence concerning the pros and cons, including a true analysis of savings and effect on the UC mission, should be presented to CPB, and the rationale for the decision should be explained.

Finally, CPB would like to emphasize how critical academic senate input is in these cases. Senate input is needed before the systems are already developed and decisions are already made. A good example of this can be found in the case of SmartSite. There were clear requirements in the CCFIT sub-committee report on the adoption of an alternative to MyUCDavis. The current SmartSite did not meet those requirements. Indeed, the decision to use a commercial vendor is directly opposed to the requirements. The adoption of SmartSite is clearly a case in which the campus has lowered educational effectiveness and increased faculty workload. For example, SmartSite makes it difficult to weight assignments in particular ways, and it insists on computing grades in terms of percentages when faculty members may want raw scores. Even when one attempts to use “grade override,” students end up seeing the unwanted, and often misleading, computations created by SmartSite. The program also makes it difficult to include Extension students in a class roster.
Faculty and student time is wasted in efforts to provide access to such students, even though departments benefit greatly from the students’ fees. This is just one of many examples of centralized IT decisions creating work for faculty and students under the banners of ‘efficiency’ and ‘cost savings’.