

Faculty Participation within Information Technology Governance at Colorado State University

A Report created by the Faculty Council Task Force on Information Technology

Task Force Members

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Introduction

In light of challenges associated with the increasing use of educational technology, Faculty Council President Sue Doe and Vice President of Information Technology (IT) Brandon Bernier convened a Task Force on IT in Fall 2020 and charged the group with examining communication and engagement models that will strengthen future partnership between IT and faculty. Members of the task force met and discussed challenges and opportunities for improving the IT system as it relates to the teaching, research, service, and administrative missions that faculty perform. Framed broadly, members of the committee identified opportunities to improve the way the system operates that ranged from access and cost, to governance and participation.

Task Force Findings

1. Faculty, along with students, administrative professionals, state classified personnel, and IT professionals, are critical stakeholders in the IT infrastructure system at Colorado State University, as the teaching, research, service, and administrative functions of faculty are performed using digital tools, systems, and networks.
2. The existing governance model for the IT infrastructure at CSU would be strengthened by increasing faculty (specifically) and stakeholder (generally) perspectives and participation within the IT governance structure at CSU.
3. Elements of the existing IT model that are working well should be retained. For instance, there is much to be desired about the centralized- and distributed-IT environment at CSU, as this arrangement enables the university to work in the collective interests of units while empowering units to also make independent decisions in line with their disciplinary needs. Yet, tensions between the models appear to exist, especially when faculty and other campus stakeholders are not meaningfully integrated into governance

structures where deliberative and decision making work regarding high-stakes IT occurs.

4. Increasing meaningful participation within high-stakes IT deliberations and decisions through the formalization of faculty and stakeholder participation in governance not only benefits CSU by the development of an IT infrastructure that meets the needs and expectations of various stakeholder constituencies, but also by improving faculty and stakeholder confidence that decisions surrounding IT have been reached through democratic participation that has formalized channels for stakeholders to engage in dialogue about decisions before they have been entered into (e.g., Unizin).

Recommendations

1. Faculty Council should consider assembling a Standing Committee on IT (CoIT) similar to CoRSAF, CoTL, CoFG that might serve broadly as a group of faculty liaisons on and representatives within IT governance issues. Membership on the committee would be comprised of elected faculty from units, as is the practice with existing standing committees.
2. We recommend that the first charge of the Standing Committee on IT would be to compose a statement on its mission and scope, including both a transparent and formal process whereby faculty can raise issues of concern to the committee and attention to how the proposed mission and scope of CoIT should align with the existing governance model.
3. We recommend that existing stakeholders within the IT Governance model partner with CoIT to integrate and formalize faculty within deliberative decisions surrounding IT by appropriately revising the existing IT Governance Structure.

Conclusion

With the above, the IT Task Force hopes that issues relevant to all stakeholders—such as equity, ethics, transparency, and consistency—will be deliberated with respect to the expertise of faculty members to make meaningful and democratic decisions related to IT.