

University of Missouri-Saint Louis



# **External Reviewer Report – ITS Administrative Review**

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## **Review Date**

Campus Visit – June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2006

## **Review Team Members**

External Reviewer - Tom Brenneman, Associate Chief Information Officer, UMKC

Campus Review Team Chair - Carl Hoagland, Emerson Electric Co. Professor of Technology and Learning

Campus Review Team Faculty Member - Lon Wilkens, Professor, Biology

Campus Review Team Staff Member - Tamara Kratochvil, Senior Grant Writer, Office of Research Administration

Campus Review Team Student Member - Joe Garavaglia

## **Review Stakeholders**

- Academic Stakeholders - Jennifer Siciliani, Robert Keel, Chung Wong, Nigam Rath, Elizabeth Kellogg, Jim Fay, Teresa Thiel, Vicki Sauter, Peggy Cohen, Joel Glassman, Maggie Otoole, Dixie Kohn
- External Stakeholders - Brian McHugh, Mike Saputo, Rooney Thomas (Dell Computers), Bill Hentschell, and Karen Montgomery (AT&T) - by phone
- Student Affairs Stakeholders - John Kundel, Teresa Balestreri, Orinthia Montague, Greg McCalley, Betsy Sampson, Melissa Hattman, student representatives.
- Administrative Stakeholders - Sylvia Poe, Gloria Schultz, Joann Wilkinson, Gina Ganahl, Gloria Collins, Peter Heithaus.

## **Overview**

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the committee, ITS and campus executive leadership for their kindness, support and interest by allowing me to share my observations and suggestions. I would also like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Mary Lou Hines for recommending me as an External Reviewer to Dr. Tom.

Dr. Tom and the ITS team are fortunate indeed to have such strong support from their Chancellor and Provost. It is very clear that ITS has endeavored to keep them informed and involved about campus IT issues. When I met directly with the Chancellor and Provost we spoke about current IT projects, data infrastructure achievements, IT funding and Stakeholder's comments. Again, it was clear that campus executive leadership is keenly interested in the role of IT at UMSL in how it supports research, teaching and learning on their campus.

The sessions with the various stakeholders were stimulating, interactive and to the point. The Committee Chairman developed an open environment that was comfortable yet professional, ensuring that each stakeholder had an opportunity to provide input... which they did with little hesitation.

Due to high interaction, the discussions were exceeding time limits; in fact we fell behind schedule after the first stakeholder group meeting. The Chairman ensured that each group had their allotted time and we made up the difference during lunch. At the beginning of each session, the Chairman asked three questions with each group. They were:

What are the:

1. Strengths of ITS
2. Weaknesses of ITS
3. Recommendations for ITS

These questions were quite useful as ice breakers and gave each stakeholder a chance to really focus on the areas they were most concerned about.

In general I found each session positive and highly complimentary of ITS services and capabilities.

Multiple ITS services were mentioned during each session with both positive and negative comments, they were:

1. Call Center
2. Web Development Group
3. Faculty Resource Center
4. My Gateway
5. The new Beowulf Cluster – Research Computing
6. UMSL Events
  - a. High Performance Computing Day
  - b. Technology and Career Briefings
  - c. Provost's Briefing
7. Peoplesoft Student Module Management and Coordination

Whether the comments were negative or positive, it appeared that each comment was made in the spirit of improvement or acknowledgement of a critical service in support of teaching and learning at UMSL.

## **Review Sessions**

### **1. Administrative Session**

The administrative session was very stimulating. Provost Cope's gave a clear indication of what executive leadership expects from ITS. Key items were:

1. Keeping ITS on the cutting edge
2. Maintaining services critical to the campus mission
3. Supporting residential student shift
4. Smooth and effective Peoplesoft implementation

Provost Cope also spoke about the importance of the 5 year review of all administrative/academic departments at UMSL and how an up to date "campus portfolio" will be critical when North Central Accreditation performs accreditation review in the spring of 2009.

The Provost stressed the importance of the following areas:

1. Data Security – Data and Computer Security
2. IT Governance – Role of advisory committees – Faculty Senate – IT Committees
3. Professional Development – Center for Teaching and Learning
4. Research – Technology Transfer – Support of Biotech – High Performance Computing.

### **2. External Stakeholders Session**

This session was encouragingly positive. The External Stakeholders had great things to say about the UMSL events sponsored by ITS, mentioning especially High Performance Computer Day, Technology and Career Briefing and Provost's Forums. One Stakeholder spoke of the benefits of working with UMSL in these events especially in having access to a student audience. The opportunity to speak or present to 50+ students seemed to be very important to the Stakeholders. The External Stakeholders mentioned the following joint accomplishments:

1. Established PC Standards
2. Willingness to entertain new ideas
3. Use of collaboration/Distance Learning Tools
4. The ITS Staff was more effective than Universities with much larger staffs.
5. ITS has a teamwork attitude.

- 6 Willingness to understand new technologies.
- 7 Invites people outside of UMSL to:
  - o Seminars
  - o Workshops

The following suggestions were made by the External Stakeholders:

- 1 More strategic involvement in:
  - o Load Balancing
  - o Grid Computing
  - o Wireless Technologies
- 2 Increased training is needed for ITS Personnel
- 3 Have more IT Liaison Meetings in which External Stakeholders are involved.

The External Stakeholders commented that ITS keeps them informed and or involves them in present and future IT project planning. They also mentioned that ITS gives a fair debriefing on why the vendor did not get a bid and also when they were awarded the bid.

### 3. Student Affairs Stakeholders Session

The student affairs session was a very positive experience for all involved. One of the first points that were brought up was: "ITS is willing to listen to what users need". There was much affirmative head nodding by the entire group when mentioned. They spoke about their increased comfort with the Peoplesoft implementation now that Dr. Tom was in charge of the Student Module rollout.

On the less positive side the group stressed several times that ITS did not have enough personnel to meet current demands as they understood them. They did not mention how many FTE to add.

Admissions personnel suggested a "Laptop loaner program" where faculty/staff could use when presenting information at conferences or in a meeting room on campus. They did speak highly of the Help Desk and how superb the service has been and how instrumental ITS was in their department's success. One Stakeholder observed that it was her experience that when a call for assistance was made and a technician was dispatched, that technician arrived in five minutes or less (on average).

Additional comments:

- 1 Many expressions of thanks to the ITS Web Development Group and their support of the Graduate School Dissertation Project
- 2 The improved collaboration – The Technology and Careers program and how ITS had marketed the program to students first.
- 3 Changing e-mail user names for females who changed names because of marriage etc... and how this service is now automated.
- 4 The Turnover of IT personnel – felt it was too high
  - o Felt that UMSL IT Salaries are low.
  - o The fact that once the person has technical training and/or certifications, they leave.
- 5 My Gateway – Huge hit with Students and Faculty. Provides grades, email, course information and files accessible from a secure web page.

#### 4. Academic Affairs Stakeholders Session

The Academic Affairs session was lively and even at times, fun. There were times when the conversation turned to the negative side of an issue, but the Committee Chairman was very skillful at keeping the comments directed at ITS and away from non-IT issues. It was encouraging and even inspirational to see other faculty members assist the Chairman in keeping comments focused on ITS and not drift to another department or service.

##### Stakeholder Comments:

- 1 The Help Desk – Good Help/very Knowledgeable/good in returning calls/responsive/willing to help
- 2 The Training Room Setup – computers are “always ready to go”
- 3 Superb Programming Services – Feedback systems (Course Evaluations and Surveys)

##### Stakeholder Suggestions

- 1 Retirees to keep their e-mail accounts for life?
- 2 List of: “What to do to fix it” – when you are having computer problems.
- 3 Clearing up what to do about confusion when users cannot log into Outlook or My Gateway the help desk sends them to Human Resources to remedy the SSO problem which is incorrect.
- 4 The need for more support for emerging distance education/learning programs. (ITS should be more supportive of a campus wide initiative)
- 5 The suggestion of using faculty to test new software to obtain their input.
- 6 Departmental IT representatives (IT Liaisons) – need to re-look at them. Possibly conduct monthly meetings.
- 7 Desktop program – need to consider/improve ergonomics when planning to change a computer.
- 8 Provide support for PDA’s and Printers.
- 9 Need to expand Beowulf Cluster – more research computing capabilities!
- 10 Develop a “Computer Check-up” link on ITS site. (will tell the user if they have a problem then will automatically fix it)
  - o Need Auto Help Desk (On-Line)
- 11 Enterprise Management Systems
  - o Use WSUS and SMS for Windows Desktop Management.
- 12 Help Desk – Why are advanced computer users unhappy with their services?

## **Summary**

ITS at UMSL has successfully aligned their goals, vision and mission statements with the campus strategic plan. They have achieved this with broad participation which has made their planning more responsive to client's needs and will help to support the IT strategic plan over time.

My only observations for improvements are on the technical side. My suggestions are:

- Upon touring ITS spaces I did notice in the server room that most of the wiring to servers and switches needed improvement. Labels and proper wiring paths are critical for quickly troubleshooting network problems.
- Need to improve server and PC naming conventions. The names did not reflect anything about the location, owner or function of the system. (This problem may be already corrected)

Yearly, Educause polls IT professionals around the world to find out what challenges they are facing. The top 10 issues include IT security, IT funding, supporting administrative systems, disaster recovery, faculty development, infrastructure improvements, strategic planning, IT governance, E-learning and web systems. Many of these challenges exist throughout UM today. Finding ways to overcome these challenges will require teamwork, planning and innovation. Judging from the review sessions, ITS is well on its way to identify and overcome these challenges.

It was a pleasure to participate in the review sessions. I commend what the ITS team has accomplished to improve communications, technical services and develop trust with Administration, Faculty, Staff and Students.