

A New Model for Information Technology at Miami University

December 15, 2009

*Note: This document suggests a number of possible responses to the changing environment that higher education and Miami University currently face. Widespread discussion of these suggestions will be necessary before finalizing a strategic direction for information technology. This draft is meant to spark discussion of the strategies through which information technology can serve to advance Miami University. **Please direct comments to debra.allison@muohio.edu***

Executive Summary

In February 2009 Dr. David Hodge made the following statement to the IT Services staff:

“I am a passionate believer that IT has absolutely changed the fundamentals of education forever.”

Clearly this is so at Miami and elsewhere: information technology has revolutionized the world and impacted almost every aspect of the educational experience. These changes have been accomplished with substantial institutional investments of both human effort and budget.

Currently, disruptive changes are underway in the higher education environment, resulting in an increasingly urgent need to identify ways in which information technologies can advance the higher education mission. The opportunities for application of technology to strategic needs are so plentiful that they dramatically exceed institutional resources, both in terms of funding and personnel. Selection of the best opportunities is critical, as we can ill afford to misuse our time or our budget dollars.

Information technologies are constantly advancing. As existing technologies mature and new technologies emerge, we must re-evaluate which services will be provided, how best to provide them, and the costs of doing so. In short, difficult choices involving trade-offs must be made in order to advance Miami University for the benefit of our students, faculty and staff. Most often, these are not IT decisions, but University decisions that require discussion and prioritization across Miami. The Vice President for Information Technology is responsible for identifying these opportunities, raising awareness, and coordinating discussion and decisions.

The following opportunities are further described in the full document:

Teaching Learning & Research:

1. Faculty Advisory Council
2. Closer collaboration with CELTUA
3. Student Internship Program
4. Course Management System of the future
5. Clearer definition of roles and responsibilities for central and distributed IT (“core” and “edge” services).
6. Growth in blended courses and programs

Student Life:

1. Convenience and customization
2. Heightened expectations for baseline services
3. Partnerships in IT service development

Administration:

1. Data-driven decisions
2. Replacement administrative systems
3. Self-service applications
4. Electronic workflows
5. Differently sourced commodity IT services
6. Shared knowledge solutions

IT Management:

1. Prioritization framework
2. IT job families
3. Exchange Days
4. IT staff skills and agility
5. Distributed decision-making

While this document highlights a selection of technologies and ideas that may hold promise for advancing Miami University, it is important to recognize over-arching pre-requisites for our success. Development of the following approaches will help insure our staff and financial resources realize their maximum benefit:

1. Framework for allocation of budget and staff resources for initiatives university-wide, to help insure the highest priority initiatives receive the resources required.
2. Framework for identifying and securing funding (initial and ongoing) for initiatives prior to the investment of significant effort, to help insure informed decisions.
3. Strategy for “right-sourcing” a service (internal, external, hybrid), to help preserve internal resources for those services that provide differentiating advantages.
4. Investment in IT staff development, clarification of roles and responsibilities, and career paths to place staff in a position with an enhanced opportunity for success for both individuals and the University.

While none of us would choose current economic conditions, they present us with opportunities that can sharpen our focus. It is important to display both near and distant vision...near, so that we can place Miami in a better position to succeed with current resources; distant, in order to make progress toward our third century of success. Information technologies and IT professionals alone cannot make this happen, as Miami is not an IT organization, it is an institution of higher education that leverages IT to fulfill its mission. Moving forward with the right set of decisions requires our best collective thinking and continuing commitment as University citizens. Please join us as we make strides for Miami University's future.

The Need for Change

“Development of our IT infrastructure and profile is critical to our continued success in teaching and scholarship.” Jeffrey Herbst

Higher education in the U.S. is likely facing the most difficult set of challenges in its history. The rules and frameworks for higher education in the 21st century are profoundly different than those of the 20th century. Demands for more access, accountability and affordability as specified in the 2006 Spellings Commission Report, combined with an economy under duress and “disruptive innovations” in education (Christensen, 2008) create a perfect storm. Many public institutions including Miami University, face mandated tuition freezes coupled with the impact of the recession on fundraising and endowments, and must reduce costs and identify new sources of revenue to balance their budgets.

In part, institutions look to information technology to help improve effectiveness and efficiency with existing operations. Yet we must also recognize the need for new technology brought on by student-centric learning. (Christensen, 2008) Miami must be more entrepreneurial, more creative, more attuned to the costs of initiatives in addition to outcomes, and in general, more attuned to effective prioritization.

Higher education institutions, and Miami University, are up to the challenge. For all of its sense of permanence, higher education has dramatically transformed itself since its inception. Rather than think of Miami University as impervious to change, let’s recognize that universities, while persistent, are also adaptable. (Katz, p. xv) Miami University can, and must, change.

Information technology faces parallel challenges to the institution at large. Colleges and universities have come to depend upon IT to serve as the distribution means for instruction, research, business, entertainment, and personal communication within the university, with colleagues around the world, and with vendors and other service providers. Information technology is now woven into every aspect of a university, and the percent of institutional budgets allocated to information technology is under increasing scrutiny.

Executive administrations are looking to information technology to deliver on past investments. The focus is on delivering value and delivering on the perceived promises of information technology – assist the university in improving efficiency, convenience, and effectiveness, and even assist in improving academic outcomes.

Miami University increased funding for information technology in fiscal years 2004 and 2005, following a 2002 external consulting report, and the University’s first IT strategic plan issued in May 2004 through the leadership of Reid Christenberry. President Garland authorized allocation of \$1.6M in both FY04 and FY05 for technology improvements. Too-frequent service outages, long response times, and the recognized need for new services were primary drivers.

This funding increase enabled successful completion within five years of 32 out of the 36 projects called for by the IT strategic plan issued in May 2004. Service reliability improved, primarily through improvements to the infrastructure for course management system, administrative system, and the network. Many new services were implemented, including support for research computing.

Expectations for information technology and the IT staff increased with the funding influx. Those expectations are combined with heightened need to deliver on the inherent promises in information technology due to the social and economic pressures facing higher education in 2009. How can information technology assist the faculty in creating the desired learning outcomes? Assist the business offices in accomplishing their work with fewer staff and smaller budgets? Assist the distributed IT staff

in freeing up time to deliver more value-added service to their faculty? Assist the executives, deans, directors and department chairs in making more informed decisions in these unprecedented times? And even, how can information technology assist the IT professionals in being more effective?

With the budget cuts implemented across the University beginning with FY09 and FY10, the budget influx has been more than reversed. Budget cuts totaling \$4.16M, plus an unbudgeted funding elimination for capital equipment of \$500,000 annually, equate to a 20.3% total funding decrease. (Permanent reductions to the original FY09 E&G budget of \$22,949,391: \$350,000 reduction in FY09 for the web presence initiative \$2,315,390 beginning FY09, \$1.5M additional beginning with the FY10-11 biennium, and discontinuation of an unbudgeted annual allotment of \$500,000 for capital equipment refresh. Total: \$4,665,390.) Clearly, it will be challenging to maintain the improvements in service reliability, enhance existing services, and introduce crucial new services. Given the competing needs, careful university-wide prioritization of services and initiatives is imperative.

This is the challenging environment we face. To create a vision for information technology at Miami University in an era of severely constrained funding is daunting, especially given that for information technology “...we cannot fully envision the territory that lies ahead.” (Katz, p. 12) Yet, current pressures also help focus us on delivering value by leveraging past investments in information technology. We don’t have the budget flexibility we’ve experienced in the recent past. We must be far more strategic in our use of our staff and funding resources. While it will be important for the University to make new investments, we should also search out ways to leverage past investments in the IT infrastructure, our people (both their skills as well as their institutional knowledge), and the wealth of data assembled over the past ten years through the Banner system. Miami can no longer afford duplication of services and staff. The overall challenge facing us requires more effective use of Miami’s strategic assets, including staff, funds, physical plant, and data.

How can we accomplish more effective use of our strategic assets? The answers form the vision for IT at Miami over the next five years and beyond. While the following lists are much longer than we could accomplish even without the current economic constraints, it is important that we think broadly as to what can be done and then choose those opportunities which best align with the strategic goals of the University and our students, faculty and staff.

The institution’s IT leader has a dual role – at the foundation level, IT services must be reliable and tightly bound to the strategic goals of the organization which it serves. In addition, the CIO must also serve in a leadership role, identifying opportunities for creative applications of information technology to the evolving needs of the higher education institution. Given the pace of change in technology and the pressures from changing economic models for higher education, selective prioritization of those initiatives providing the highest possible contribution to the institution’s strategic goals is critical.

Let’s think about possible ways in which information technology can advance Miami University.

Imagine Miami University...

...with the ability to access course materials “on the go,” and register for classes from a handheld device.

...where many aspects of class sessions are recorded and indexed for later use by students.

...with successful replacement of “lost” credit hours through an expanded offering of web-based courses delivered to students, where advantageous to the curriculum and the student, perhaps with increased flexibility for start dates.

...with a well-structured summer academic program that enables students to progress toward their degrees while at home.

...with the ability to drill down into the characteristics of the students in a specific program who have not yet registered for the next semester's classes to identify key commonalities and determine a proactive course of action.

...with the ability to reduce the investment in capital equipment on campus, along with associated energy consumption, in exchange for service from lower-cost commercial or collegiate providers.

...with the ability to stretch the life of desktop computers from four to six years.

...with the ability to reduce the amount of staff time required to validate and process travel reimbursement requests.

...where students regularly use high-performance computing to complete class assignments and projects.

...with one portal for all information associated with classes and organizations for students, faculty and staff.

...with the ability to replace travel to another location with meetings over the Internet on demand.

...with faster receipt of supplies at lower, managed costs.

...with more effective use of space, staff, and budget resources through shared services and shared data center facilities with other IUC institutions.

Many of these services use technologies that are considered mainstream in the corporate world, but aren't yet in widespread use within higher ed institutions due to competing priorities for resources. In addition, information technology often is not seen as a strategic asset in higher education. However, this is changing with wider recognition of the value of technologies in the classroom, and through such initiatives as business intelligence and unified communications. Miami University is fortunate in that its executive leaders recognize the strategic value of information technology.

In this period of constrained resources it is imperative that all changes be carefully planned. Choosing to implement or enhance any service will mean reallocation of fiscal and human resources, and will require trade-offs that need to be weighed. As part of this planning, we must recognize that change will require deep-down, persistent collaboration among University departments and with other higher education institutions. They will require us to challenge desirable, yet resource-intensive definitions of good service as requiring "high touch" person-to-person service and arrive at a definition considering efficiency, effectiveness, and 24/7 service availability. In short, they will require changes in perspective and in culture while maintaining our core values.

Leveraging Past Investments for Future Innovation

“ Information technology is at the center of everything we do today in Finance and Business Services. Our ability to improve services, increase our efficiency and provide better information for financial planning is tied to the success of our collaboration with the staff in Information Technology Services and our joint efforts to maximize the benefits from our enterprise wide system and other technologies.

“ David Creamer

In response to these challenges, the following is proposed as the building blocks of the strategic direction for information technology in support of Miami University’s goals. Adoption will require broad conversations across all campuses of Miami University and recognition that careful selection of initiatives will be required, due to budget constraints. There are many worthy ideas to be pursued, but our best collective thinking is required to identify and prioritize the smaller set of initiatives that deliver the most value for Miami and are achievable within budgetary realities.

Teaching, Learning and Research

Considerable progress has been made over the past five years in terms of providing information technology services for redesign of the course curriculum, research computing, and facilitating the distribution of course materials and teaching outside the classroom. Some possible initiatives and strategies to consider for the future are as follows:

- a. **A Faculty Advisory Council** dedicated to advising IT Services on priorities for teaching, learning and research is important to Miami’s success. The Council should advise IT Services and the IT Strategic Advisory Council, through collaboration with the Center for Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and University Assessment (CELTUA).
- b. **Establish a closer collaboration with CELTUA**, in light of its redefined mission. CELTUA, in conjunction with the Faculty Advisory Council mentioned above, should assist in establishing priorities, as well as identifying opportunities for innovation and improvements. IT Services can take a broader proactive approach in partnering the use of technology in courses to develop and implement solutions that aid larger numbers of faculty, through collaboration with CELT and a faculty advisory council.
- c. **A student internship program** for IT Services can be implemented for opportunities during the academic year, perhaps in partnership with faculty for independent study credit, and during the summer for professional internship opportunities. We can assist our students in their competitive readiness for employment and can benefit from their talents in an era of constrained staffing resources. The emphasis should be on relatively persistent relationships during the academic year plus summer assignments, due to the orientation and specific skills development required. IT Services has been effectively using student employees for many years. In some cases, developing these opportunities with more of an internship flavor in conjunction with the appropriate faculty may be all that is required.
- d. **Course Management System of the future.** Much like the situation with SunGard SCT Banner mentioned below, we need to think about what we need from a course management system in the future in order to success in supporting the engaged student paradigm. Our current CMS is rooted in the one-way communication model where faculty deliver knowledge and materials to students. We need tools that allow faculty to engage in on-line discussion, interaction and learning more easily and in broader ways than the current product allows. Is a community source product a better fit for us

than Blackboard? Is the need for a structured CMS disappearing in favor of other existing systems like Google Apps? Or might these needs be met with add-on products?

- e. **Clearer definition of “core” and “edge” services.** Currently, the distinction is unclear between distributed/department IT and central IT roles and responsibilities. The need is most acute in the academic units due to the number of faculty and staff they support and the need for highly specialized IT services. This results in duplication of effort and missed opportunities for departmental IT staff to allocate time towards discipline-specific needs. With the assistance of the distributed IT staff, we need to identify those services that are “core” to Miami and scale for central delivery, versus those that do not scale to the institutional level and are best delivered locally. (The concept of “core” and “edge” services is credited to Bruce Maas, CIO at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Appreciation is extended to Bruce for sharing this model with us for adaptation to Miami University.)
- f. **Research Cluster.** The current high-performance computing cluster is approaching four years in age and is projected to be insufficient for research computing needs within one year. Newer clusters require significantly less energy for power and cooling. A review of our peers in the state and nation as well as our aspirational institutions shows that our general purpose research cluster, available to all faculty and student researchers, is a distinguishing characteristic of Miami University. With the strong support from research faculty for continuing this service, and Miami’s vision for student-centered learning, we believe it is important to identify funding to purchase a replacement cluster. The presence of the cluster serves as an asset in faculty recruitment and is also supporting several classes.
- g. **Growth in blended courses and programs.** The need for blended or hybrid courses and programs with a mix of classroom and online activities will increase. Clayton Christensen of the Harvard Business School predicts that within 10 years, 50 percent of all high school courses will take place online. (Christensen, Feb. 23, 2009) Those students will enter Miami University in 2020. While faculty will continue to direct the curriculum, IT Services must be involved in planning for the appropriate infrastructure (bandwidth, course management and associated systems) and support needs (faculty support for instructional design and digital media assistance, student support). The demand for live support to faculty and students overnight and on weekends will increase dramatically, as will demands upon network bandwidth and information security.
- h. **Virtual Computer Lab.** The reduction in divisional computing labs coupled with the increasing need for students access to specialized software from any location leads us to question if the time is right to consider a Virtual Computer Lab (VCL) environment. VCLs are being successfully utilized in institutions such as North Carolina State University. A VCL provides students access to a variety of software running on a remote server (cloud). With the software running on a server in the cloud, students see the same performance, whether their machine is netbook or a high-end laptop. Miami’s continuing growth in e-learning will require us to consider this type of cloud computing option, giving students 24/7/365 access to software, regardless of location. The savings to the institution in floor space and costs for lab computers and software licensing, management and deployment can offset a portion of the investment needed for VCL. The benefit to students is clear: no requirement to purchase software needed for classroom assignments and research; ubiquitous access.
- i. **Need to address unintended consequences.** Miami has seen significant growth in non-traditional courses and workshops designed to attract employed professionals and other students during the summer or throughout the year aiming to obtain certifications or improve skills and knowledge. We expect to see continued growth along these lines, for both credit and non-credit courses. Faculty typically want technology accounts created for these students, and this is dramatically increasing the cost to provide services. For example, Miami’s annual payment to Oracle this year for the database

software maintenance fee increased by \$100,000, largely due to the iDiscovery student count. We need to develop both a more flexible account generation process as well as examine IPEDS reporting requirements. There are significant university costs incurred that aren't currently included in the business model for these courses and workshops. A holistic view of costs is important for planning purposes and cost mitigation.

Student Life

A distinguishing characteristic between today's college students and those from the 1970s and 80s is the blurring of distinctions among the various aspects of a student's life – learning, research, service learning and personal activities. Technology enables them to accomplish tasks while “on the go” and students expect to make effective use of that time. The proliferation of the Internet and portable devices with network connectivity provide a means for students to get tasks done at times and in places previously not possible.

- a. **Convenience and customization.** What this means for IT professionals is the need to deliver services that maximize convenience for the student, yet still allow for customization to meet personal preferences for managing so many competing demands. Students want “...a robust tool-set for configuring [their] world.” (Katz, p. 17) They want “access to the same rich content that online students have so they can view lectures and listen to podcasts to reinforce their learning...” (Grummon, p. 56) Given that the boundaries of various aspects of their lives are blurring, the boundaries for electronic services must be permeable and customizable if they are to meet student needs and expectations. Granting control through the ability to customize will also help reduce stress for students.
- b. **Baseline services.** High bandwidth, strong support for mobile web pages, and full-featured academic and administrative services fulfilled via a smart-phone are becoming the baseline expectation of service. The student expects to carry individual access to resources at all times. Cyber University in Japan delivers its courses via smart-phones and North Carolina's Project K-Nect for K-12 “uses smart-phones to teach mathematics by pushing problem sets, animations, and simulations to students.” (Grummon, p. 57) As today's students become tomorrow's faculty and staff, the baseline expectations and skills will travel with them.
- c. **Partners in IT service development.** It is challenging for today's IT professionals who attended college in the 20th century to understand what it means to be a student in the 21st century. Spending time in the classroom and listening to students express their needs certainly helps us design better services. When possible, we also need to more fully involve students in creation of the services we deliver to them. Partnerships with faculty are similarly critical for the success in applying information technology.

Administration

It is time to think about modernization of our approach to support administrative activities, and leverage past University investments. It has been ten years since Miami University implemented the Banner suite of products for student, financial, and HR systems. A large store of data exists which can be more effectively tapped for data-driven decisions. We have more opportunity for optimization of back-office practices to take advantage of newer technologies, reducing reliance on manual processing of routine tasks.

Some possible initiatives and strategies to consider are as follows:

- a. **Data-driven Decisions.** A business intelligence (BI) system, requiring a significant investment in software and staffing, is necessary to enable data-driven decisions. Most University decisions are currently based upon transactional data, which is insufficient for analytical and predictive purposes.

We need the ability to drill down deeper into the data to see distinguishing characteristics and trends. We are currently making progress on a “shoestring,” but this approach is inadequate for the long-term. Inter-institutional opportunities exist for sharing data designs and report structures. The outcomes will benefit both academic as well as administrative units.

- b. **Replacement administrative systems.** The SunGard SCT Banner product is not keeping pace with technology innovations, brings a costly annual maintenance price tag (\$355,338 for FY10), and constrains our agility. The Quali Foundation products – Quali Financial System, Quali Coeus for research administration, Quali Student, and Quali Rice for workflow and identity management, may offer promise, especially if leveraged state-wide with multiple IUC institutions. We need to develop knowledge of these systems to assess whether they belong in our plans for the future.
- c. **Self-service applications.** These are highly present in the consumer and corporate world, and today’s students, families and employees demand the convenience and immediate feedback that self-service provides. The expectation is that services will be available via the web and, especially among students, via hand-held devices. No longer is delivery via the web at a desktop computer sufficient. The most significant cost is office staff time to identify opportunities and participate in the development, and IT staff (and sometimes office staff) to develop the necessary code. Where possible, such code should be shared among higher education institutions.
- d. **Electronic workflows.** Despite Miami’s investments in information technology infrastructure (network and systems), we have not yet leveraged them to reduce tasks requiring manual intervention. The major cost is the office staff time to identify and automate the opportunities, rules, and processes. Freeing up office staff time will be a significant challenge given recent and upcoming position eliminations.
- e. **Differently sourced commodity IT services.** Virtualization of servers and desktops means that options for hosting the equipment and data are greatly expanded to locations outside the University, in the “cloud” of the Internet. This will require us to fundamentally rethink information technology strategies. (Katz, pp. 32-35) Local servers and storage will no longer be the predominant model for providing services; we expect to be outsourcing commodity services to external providers. These are not always a cost-savings opportunity; costs for contract management and additional bandwidth are two examples of additional costs. While careful consideration must be given to security, performance, a seamless client experience, and exit strategies, selective outsourcing can allow us to absorb staffing reductions, or free up staff to work on other initiatives. It may also mean that we identify funding to selectively bring in external resources to assist with specific initiatives.

To date, the general Miami culture has tended towards “we do it best.” While Miami has many examples of exemplary services, the current economic climate requires more creativity than this mindset allows. We need to recognize and adjust to a natural “lifecycle” with information technology services. Over time, services that were once difficult to implement and manage except on a single university basis, can mature to the point of commoditization, at which time they are candidates for release into the “cloud” of service providers outside the institution. “It is increasingly likely over the long-term that core higher education processes will be available as cloud services” provided by partners external to the university. (Katz, p. 16)

In the future, we expect common data centers among institutions in Ohio, as well as shared systems. The cost of a college degree increased at double the rate of inflation between 1989 and 2005 (Grummon, p. 50). Not only can we not afford to duplicate services among departments within a university, we can’t afford to duplicate them among state-funded institutions and still provide a quality education and attractive employee benefits.

f. Shared knowledge solutions. For all of the ease that exists in digital document creation, there are related challenges: document collaboration and management. Too many departments, including IT Services, document processes and procedures using static word processing documents that are difficult to keep current, are not searchable across the network, may not be shared with all who need access, and are frequently forgotten or lost. Web 2.0 and social networking tools offer promise for collecting and organizing information in ways that build shared, not static, knowledge.

Information Technology Management

Attracting and retaining IT staff with the required skills, and enabling current staff to grow their skills, is a perennial issue for higher education IT managers. While certainly a challenge centrally, it is often more of a challenge for distributed IT staff since IT budget needs compete with discipline-specific budget priorities. While adequate budgets and effective managers are important to the success of the IT staff, they are not sufficient. If Miami is going to succeed in leveraging past investments in technology and finding creative ways of addressing the changing economic model, we need to allocate resources toward developing the technical and communication skills of the IT staff.

Some possible initiatives and strategies to consider are as follows:

- a. **Prioritization framework.** Decisions on which investments to make or continue to make, versus which to avoid, will be both more critical and more difficult in the years ahead. “CIOs must look for opportunities to remove current IT projects and services that cannot be justified as mission-critical or institutional needs.” (Gartner, June 16, 2008, p. 5). A stated prioritization framework, in conjunction with the IT governance model, will help focus these discussions. Currently, a framework is in use for divisional prioritization of IT initiatives.
- b. **IT professionals.** Designated IT job families, career paths, a professional development program, and requirements to progress to the next level provide the necessary structure for productive IT professionals and their managers. These job “families” should be created for all IT positions at Miami – both central IT staff and IT staff distributed in the departments. Given the staffing and budget constraints, creative solutions for professional development will be required.
- c. **“Exchange Days.”** IT staff and managers need to spend time out in the administrative and academic offices, in the classroom and labs seeing how faculty use technology to teach and do research, and with students to see how they use technology to study, obtain entertainment, and participate in co-curricular activities. Externships at other universities may also serve as excellent learning opportunities. In return, students, faculty and staff may desire opportunities to shadow an IT professional for the day.
- d. **IT staff skills and agility.** Performance reviews must include conversations about the University’s future needs and the employee’s interests. A pre-requisite for a healthy IT work environment is the continuing attention to refresh staff and management skills. Staff and managers must recognize that, as IT professionals, we are expected to be career-long learners, adaptable to changing technologies and changing roles. As of July 2009, the appointment letters for IT Services staff contain the following statement: “Key to the success of Information Technology within the University is the constant evolution of the IT organization. In the face of constant environmental and technological change, rapid adaptation of the roles and skills of IT staff may be required.”

As IT professionals, we should make significant efforts to use the same technologies our students and faculty use. Doing so will aid our understanding of student and faculty needs and open up potential new uses for existing technologies.

- e. **Distributed decision-making.** One marker of success in constrained budget times with a leaner staff is the ability and willingness of staff and managers to exercise responsibility to take action at the appropriate level. This requires clearly defined roles, as well as development of the skills necessary to resolve decisions, complaints and crises.

Conclusion

IT Services has moved past tactical management of technology into a stage where information technology and the strategic goals of the University are closely aligned. However, alignment alone is no longer sufficient for successful outcomes (Morello and Kitzis). Just as the faculty aim for engaged student learning, we in IT must aim for engagement with academic and administrative activities, providing leadership through the application of information technologies to the success of Miami University. The need for discussions, advocacy, and consensus building within our IT governance councils to identify the wisest uses of Miami's limited resources is increasingly necessary in these budget times.

While meeting the challenges of the future, we must also manage the technology challenges of today. Constrained budgets and leaner staff incur risks of security breaches as well as declines in service reliability. Miami University must continue to invest in our information technology infrastructure that is now woven into every aspect of the University.

We can help advance the University by relentlessly seeking out important problems to solve, seeking more effective methods of operation, collaborating both within the University as well as among our collegiate institutions, and never losing sight of the fact that we are a service organization with the mission to serve Miami University and the students, faculty and staff. Our most valuable asset is our ability to innovate.

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(This report from a commission chartered by the Department of Education Secretary provides insight into why higher education is facing dramatically increased scrutiny by the federal and state governments, as well as citizens. The report calls on higher education institutions to provide increased accountability, access, and affordability.)

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(Gartner’s model helps “executive leaders understand the need to view priority setting in light of institutional missions and impacts on the greatest number of people within the community...Managing IT requests is quickly becoming a major issue for CIOs in higher education.”)