IT GOVERNANCE – UPDATE

Beginning this past January, the IT Review Steering Committee led an effort with an outside consultant to design a Governance structure for Information Technology at URI.

What is IT Governance? An umbrella term that refers to the policies, processes, and structures used to make a broad range of IT decisions. It also specifies accountability and authority for decision-making, creates mechanisms to understand technology needs and establish priorities, and ensures appropriate stakeholder involvement in strategic and tactical decisions.

This project was undertaken as a result of a recommendation by the President’s Administration Management Review Committee (AMRC) report, published in December 2013. A Governance structure, or process with identified individuals responsible, is commonly used in complex higher education institutions such as URI, and in private companies. Institutions implementing a collaborative structure of decision-making and communications, such as IT Governance, experience benefits such as:

- Greater transparency in the provision of technology services, and prioritizations, answering the question “Why project A but not project B?”.
- More effective decision-making and collaboration, involving faculty, staff, researchers and other involved members of our community.
- Alignment of IT priorities with University strategies.
- Improved risk identification and mitigation process.
- Accountability for IT, organizing how decisions about information technology services are made.

At URI, this effort is important for all these reasons but in particular because we do not have one central department providing IT services. ITS provides most but not all of IT services, some of which are provided within a department or through department contracts outside of URI. So communication, collaboration and planning are more challenging. This makes Governance more important for URI to eliminate duplication of effort and products and more effectively leverage the institution’s financial and human resources.

The Governance project was completed in May with a final report of recommendations to Provost DeHayes, Vice President Valentino, and the IT Review Steering Committee. Recommendations involve a series of building blocks including: implementing best practices – guidelines and procedures; establishing methodology and process – for proposing IT services, projects and funding; re-organizing and streamlining – the many University IT committees and functions as part of the overall structure with one new high-level committee. This new committee will be representative of the University and responsible for making decisions on policy, procedure, products, services and projects that impact the University as a whole or involve a major investment. The new committee will not be involved in day-to-day management of teams or departments but will instead focus on major initiatives and planning.

More information can be found at http://web.uri.edu/itreview/.