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University of Rhode Island IT Governance

The Information Technology Review Steering Committee invites you to comment on a proposed IT governance structure for the University. The proposal is based on recommendations developed by higher education IT consultant Phil Goldstein and incorporates input from nearly 100 faculty and staff. The Steering Committee will consider all feedback in revisions to a final IT governance proposal to Provost DeHayes and Vice President Valentino.

Purpose and Benefits of IT Governance

IT governance is an umbrella term that refers to the policies, processes and structures used to make a broad range of IT decisions (see table A). URI's IT governance proposal specifies accountability and authority for decision-making, creates mechanisms to develop IT strategies, propose and prioritize projects, and ensures appropriate stakeholder involvement in major IT decisions.

Implementing governance is a major component of the recommendations of the AMRC sub-committee on technology. IT governance will benefit URI by:

- Engaging stakeholders representative of all areas of the University to regularly discuss opportunities and strategies to use technology to support learning, research, operations and student success;
- Providing a consistent and transparent process to request, assess, approve and prioritize IT projects;
- Improving the coordination and communication among all IT staffs to create a more cohesive and consistent service experience; and
- Creating a culture of accountability that values and acts to use resources efficiently, continually improves services, and effectively manages risks to privacy and security.

IT governance provides a structure to guide additional actions including the development of an IT strategic plan, review of overall IT staffing and services and the implementation of future improvements to URI technology services.

Table A: Dimensions of IT Governance

Role	Responsibility
Create Alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Link investments to strategic priorities •Prioritize within and across IT portfolios •Manage the division of responsibilities •Balance risk and return
Build Acceptance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Sponsor projects •Enable change management strategies •Develop policy •Promote IT strategies
Foster Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Establish required service levels •Measure IT service performance •Provide feedback on IT services and solutions •Evaluate outcomes of major projects

IT Governance Recommendations

The IT governance proposal has five elements:

- **Adoption of principles** to guide the work of governance committees and the decision they make. (Attachment A)
- **Appointment by the Provost and the VP Administration and Finance of a senior, constituent led, IT Strategic Planning and Governance Committee (ITSGC)** to set significant priorities, guide service improvements, manage decentralization, and promote the effective use of technology. (Attachment B)
- **Reformulation of existing IT advisory committees into domain specific advisory councils that work in support of the ITSGC** to recommend strategies, advise service providers, and prioritize moderate sized initiatives. (Attachment C)
 - Councils are proposed for teaching and learning, research, student services and success, administration and operations, and information security.
 - Existing advisory committees will be restructured, combined or serve as constituted to become IT advisory committees.
- **The occasional formation of ad-hoc communities** to research common needs, open up communications, and engage IT and non-IT stakeholders in special projects.

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- Ad-hoc communities are temporary groups that are assembled to perform a specific task or project.
- **Implementation of supporting processes** to create consistent methods of proposing, evaluating and managing projects, and make it easier to understand the status of in-process and requested work.
- Commitment to a **strengthened partnership between IT leadership, faculty, and administrative leaders** to set and implement strategies, co-direct projects, and implement policies and practices that optimize the use of University resources and manage risks to security and privacy.

The proposed IT governance structures and processes will operate within the context of broader University planning and decision-making. The ITSGC will receive input from the Faculty Senate via CITICCN and the President's Senior Leadership Team. The ITSGC will engage the CIO, Deans' Council, Faculty Senate and Senior Leadership Team to review major changes in IT policies or services with broad and significant impact. Annually, the ITSGC and the CIO will jointly recommend strategic investments to the President and appropriate VP's for their submission to the Strategic Budgeting and Planning Committee and the Senior Leadership Team. The Provost and VP Administration and Finance will meet regularly with the CIO and ITSGC chair to monitor the implementation of major initiatives and ensure emerging issues or decisions receive appropriate consultation.

Coordination will also be fostered through overlapping membership on the governance councils and committees. For example, CITICCN will be represented on the ITSGC and relevant advisory councils. ITSGC members will also serve on advisory councils. Council members will also be drawn from ITS and distributed IT leaders from colleges and administrative units.

Major Elements of IT Governance

Structure	Role	Representation
IT Strategic Planning and Governance Committee (ITSGC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommend strategic priorities to senior University leadership • Resolve resource conflicts referred by Advisory councils • Coordinate the development of strategy • Recommend and implement IT policies and standard practices • Oversee an overall portfolio of projects and direct rebalancing as necessary • Manage centralization and decentralization of services 	Faculty Deans Senior leaders of service and support areas ITS Leadership
Advisory Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan the future of specific technology domains • Prioritize with ITS moderate sized projects and initiatives • Represent constituents' needs and concerns to IT service providers 	Administrative service leaders Faculty representatives ITS service leaders
IT Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate communication • Bring together stakeholders around a particular topic or technology to design and promote effective services 	Ad-hoc groups of faculty, students, staff assembled by topic Engages all IT staffs

Complementary Authority of IT and Non-IT Leaders

The ITSGC and the advisory committee complements the leadership provided by the CIO and other senior administrators. The CIO will have responsibility and accountability to:

- **Determine best use of ITS budgets and resources** to meet the goals and complete the projects approved by ITSGC and Advisory Councils.
- **Recommend investments required to maintain the University's technology infrastructure.** Inform the ITSGC, Provost and CFO of the optimal timing of replacement and maintenance projects.
- **Direct the implementation of IT policies and security practices** and **stop any action or initiative that violates policy or creates an unacceptable security risk.**
- **Temporarily stop and refer to relevant IT governance committee** for review **any technology initiative**, procurement or decision that **violates established policy, has a detrimental impact** on an approved project or strategy being pursued by another part of the University or **introduces significant inefficiencies.**

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Faculty members will continue to have responsibility and authority to select technologies specific to their research and teaching. Likewise, administrative leaders have the responsibility work with IT leaders to coordinate work requests to maintain already implemented services and technologies. Subject matter experts in administrative processes will also lead efforts to define the requirements for new services and solutions. Governance will aid these efforts by establishing consistent processes to understand needs, review and evaluate potential solutions and ensure that selected technologies are sustainable and interoperable with other URI technologies.

Next Steps

The Steering Committee expects to finalize its recommendations in May. Absent substantial changes to the proposal, it is anticipated that the new ITSGC committee will be appointed this summer. The ITSGC will then coordinate the formation and charging of Advisory Councils and work with the CIO to design and implement the enabling processes that support governance.

Additional information including Consultant Phil Goldstein's presentation of IT governance recommendations to the Steering Committee can be found at (web.uri.edu/itreview).

Attachment A – Guiding Principles

- **Transparency** - Decision-making process and outcomes will be well defined and broadly communicated.
- **Engagement** – Decision-making processes will be inclusive of many and focus on university-wide IT.
- **Responsiveness**- Governance committees and IT organizations will work together to find ways to meet needs and remove barriers to progress.
- **Leadership**- Governance will encourage, seed and advocate for new investments that are important to the University's future.
- **Innovation** – *Governance will seed new ideas, promote effective practices and collaborate with IT leaders to explore new uses of technology.*
- **Accountability** – Governance will value, measure and promote the effective and secure use of technology and the continual improvement of services. We will lead by example.
- **Partnership** – The effective management and use of the University's information technology requires a collaborative effort among IT organizations, administrative and academic departments.

Attachment B – The IT Leadership Council

Proposed Representation	Meeting Frequency
<p>CITICCN, Deans, CIO, Major Service Units (e.g., Enrollment Management, Finance, Research), representative from advisory councils such as web policy council, President’s Information Security Committee</p>	<p>Bi- monthly including extended planning retreat</p>
Responsibility	Decision-Rights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor/guide long-range IT planning • Assess IT effectiveness • Understand risk and support mitigation strategies • Sponsor policy development • Identify IT investment priorities and opportunities to use technology to further strategic goals • Maintain an effective balance of distributed and shared IT services • Promote effective and efficient IT services that meet constituents’ requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and approve a semi-annual IT project portfolio • Recommend major new investments in technology to SBPC and Senior Leadership • Approve IT policies (subject to Faculty and Senior Administration Review) • Approve University IT services and funding mechanisms (subject to Executive Oversight review) • Approve major changes to services and service levels

Attachment C – IT Advisory Councils

Membership	Meeting Frequency
Overlapping membership with ITSGC. Existing committees combine, restructure or operate as comprised as they assume the role of advisory council to ITSGC,	Every 6 to 8 weeks
Responsibility	Decision-Rights
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recommend strategic direction for technology domain• Influence the direction and development of services.• Align IT investments and projects with functional unit or college goals and priorities• Coordinate initiatives with similar objectives across functional areas or colleges• Establish and manage an annual work plan for ITS and functional/college resources• Solicit feedback from and support efforts to communicate with stakeholders in the technology domain.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approve an annual work plan for systems and process improvement projects• Approve re-prioritization of existing workload when new needs arise• Approve strategies to resolve resource conflicts between functional and technical units collaborating on IT projects• Recommend to ITLC major initiatives to enhance or replace existing services or introduce new capabilities that are too large to accomplish within the annual work plan.• Identify and recommend to ITLC and Senior Administration strategies to remove barriers to effective implementation of IT strategies and policies or the effective adoption of University IT services.

Proposed Councils

Council	Scope
Teaching and Learning	Online learning technology and support, classroom technology, LMS, and other broadly used academic technology
Research	High performance computing, research networks, collaboration tools, data capture, transport, analysis, storage and archiving. Research application development and research computing support services.
Student Services and Success	Student information systems and processes, advising, career services, student affairs, student and alumni communication and engagement. Includes learning analytics.

Council	Scope
Administration and Operations	Processes and technologies that support pre and post award research, financial management, procurement, human resources, facilities, and auxiliary enterprise operations. Includes management information and analytics.
Information Security	Policies, practices and strategies to detect and mitigate security and privacy risks.