

Report of the Faculty Senate Technology and Infrastructure Committee, February 17, 2020

The committee reported at the November 21, 2019, meeting of the Faculty Senate. Since that time the committee has met on January 27, February 3, and February 11, 2020.

Recent activities

On January 27 we met with President Dooley, Provost DeHayes, CIO Kaugars, and Faculty Senate Chair Nassersharif. We thank Provost DeHayes for initiating and arranging the meeting and for distributing copies of the IT Strategic Plan 2017-2021. The main purpose of the meeting was to coordinate the work of our committee with that of the Information Technology Strategic Governance Committee (ITGov). A constant priority of the Technology and Infrastructure Committee has been to guarantee that faculty representatives have an important voice in discussions about technologies that have or will have a significant impact on faculty work.

At the meeting on January 27 we asked that two members of our committee, rather than one, be appointed to ITGov. It now appears that this will happen. We also suggested that information about ITGov be added to the University Manual. All present at the meeting agreed that our committee should reengage with CIO Kaugars.

CIO Kaugars joined us for meetings on February 3 and February 11. On February 3 he asked us to identify items in the IT Strategic Plan which we considered to be worthwhile for us to work on. On February 11 we went through the IT Strategic Plan with CIO Kaugars point by point. Our general conclusion was that the Technology and Infrastructure Committee should see its primary role as improving communications both from and to the faculty about information technologies. We also identified three specific action items in the Plan which we want to follow up on:

Page 8, Goal 1, Strategy 1, Action 8:

Maintain and support a scalable and sustainable Learning Management System (LMS) working with appropriate departments and committees to continually evaluate the performance and usability of the LMS while looking for opportunities for growth

Page 10, Goal 2, Strategy 1, Action 3:

Establish mechanisms for improving communications and increasing awareness around research computing.

Page 15, Goal 5, Strategy 1, Action 1:

Establish and communicate information security as a University-wide initiative, with the active support of senior leadership.

(The full plan is online at https://web.uri.edu/itgov/files/IT-Strategic-Plan-2017_Final.pdf)

Goals for the rest of 2020 (spring and fall)

1. We want to sort out relationships with other Faculty Senate committees whose responsibilities overlap with ours. One example is that both the Technology and Infrastructure Committee and the Research and Creative Activities Committee have an interest in research computing. Another example is that both the Technology and Infrastructure Committee and the Teaching, Advising, and Assessment Committee have an interest in the effectiveness of technologies supporting instruction.
2. We have been so busy trying to keep up with technology issues that we have spent very little time on the “infrastructure” part of our responsibilities. We intend to correct that.
3. We want to engage with two new IT Directors who are being hired. One will be the Director for Teaching and Learning, and the other will be the Director for Research Computing. The committee chair met the finalists for the Teaching and Learning position, and the chair or another member of the committee will meet the finalists for the Research Computing position.
4. We intend to be involved during the 2020-2021 academic year in drafting the new five-year IT Strategic Plan for 2022-2026. ITGov will be responsible for drafting the new plan.

Looking a little farther ahead

1. At some point in 2021 we intend to gather information about faculty experiences with Brightspace.
2. We intend to be involved in planning for the replacement of PeopleSoft. This will be a multi-year process. The chair of the committee participated in a work session with representatives of one potential vendor in December. He expects to participate in work sessions with representatives of a second potential vendor later this week.