A CHARGE TO THE MSU DENVER INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY STRATEGIC PLANNING TASK FORCE

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Metropolitan State University of Denver is celebrating many successes and achievements while preparing for an exciting future. As the top educator of resident undergraduate students in Colorado, MSU Denver recently began offering graduate programs, completed a rebranding effort as a part of becoming a university, and completed construction of two major state-of-the-art capital projects – a Hotel and Hospitality Learning Center and a 149,000 square foot Student Success Building.

In addition, MSU Denver recently completed a comprehensive, two-year institutional planning effort, which resulted in a new university strategic plan, *A Time of Transformation*. With this new set of goals and objectives, the campus has a unique opportunity to create an integrated and strategically aligned plan for technology services that focuses on how they can best engage, support, and serve the institution. For MSU Denver to advance the university strategic plan promoting the principles of diversity, a democratic workplace, and entrepreneurship, information technology (IT) must operate as a strategic university asset. Information technology systems and services must not only provide efficiency and automation, but must also integrate with and support the entire institution.

This integration requires technology systems and services, as well as personnel and resources, to work proactively and in partnership with the institution. As Kim Nash, who serves as the CIO of a $5 billion consumer packaged-goods company, explains:

“Information technology does not respond to business decisions, it participates in the planning that leads to them.”

These same philosophical statements are echoed across higher education. Brian Hawkins, former president of Educause, wrote:

“All too often, computing plans are focused on technology itself, rather than on how technology enables faculty and students to achieve some of the key instructional or research goals of the institution. If it is to have a strong chance of succeeding, the plan cannot be distinct from or tangential to the overall academic mission of the university—indeed, the plan must flow from an understanding of the mission…”

Proactive alerts about student performance, predictive modeling related to student success, and comprehensive reporting of institutional performance are all examples of how technology is guided by institutional goals. This type of integration and strategic alignment requires a plan for technology systems and services directly guided by the institutional priorities, and a technology organization exemplified by a comprehensive shared governance model with a commitment to transparency and communication. Therefore, along with developing a comprehensive strategic plan and forming a shared governance model, considering the structure of the IT services organization also is key to successful integration and strategic alignment.

During the last ten years, the IT services organization has endured a series of significant changes. This has included major cuts to personnel and resources as a result of budget reductions and a series of re-organizations. MSU Denver is committed to investing in IT infrastructure, services, and personnel as a way to ensure it remains a strategic institutional asset.
By addressing strategic planning, shared governance, and organizational structure, MSU Denver technology services will be equipped to enable faculty, staff, and students to achieve key institutional and educational goals. This effort will provide a mechanism for the selection, implementation, and support of technology systems and services to occur transparently and in partnership with individuals and departments across the university.

The section below outlines a recommended approach to strategic planning for IT services: The first step involves the creation of a task force charged with recommending a comprehensive shared governance model for IT services, and leading the development of an IT strategic plan that aligns with the MSU Denver Strategic Plan, *A Time of Transformation*, to include a recommendation for organizational structure.

**MSU Denver Information Technology Strategic Planning Task Force**

The Information Technology Task Force must be representative of MSU Denver’s diverse community of faculty, staff, students, and administrators. Recommended membership of 20 is as follows:

1. two (2) faculty members from each School, appointed by the respective Deans – a total of six (6),
2. one (1) representative from Faculty Senate,
3. one (1) Associate Vice President appointed by the Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs
4. one (1) Associate Vice President appointed by the Vice President of Administration and Finance,
5. one (1) Associate Vice President appointed by the Vice President of Advancement and External Relations,
6. the Associate to the President for Marketing and Communications, or designee,
7. two (2) representatives appointed by the Student Government Assembly,
8. one (1) representative appointed by Classified Staff Council,
9. one (1) representative appointed by the Council of Administrators,
10. one (1) representative appointed by the Council of Chairs,
11. the Chief Technology Officer, and
12. the Chief Information Officer.

In addition, Task Force Co-Chairs will be appointed by the President and include a Dean or Associate Vice President and a faculty member. A steering committee will include the co-chairs, two of the faculty members, the CTO, and the CIO. Other individuals from across technology services may be included in the process and discussions to provide expertise as appropriate.

The remainder of this document constitutes the MSU Denver President’s charge to the task force, and includes the following: immediately recommend a representative governance structure for IT services; and conduct a comprehensive IT strategic planning process to be completed by the Summer 2013. The latter task will include the review and recommendation of possible long-term organizational models for the IT services organization.

**Information Technology Shared Governance**

It is recommended that the Information Technology Strategic Planning Task Force begin the process of developing a comprehensive shared governance structure by creating a new Information Technology
Strategic Oversight Committee to review all matters of policy, strategy, and management of the MSU Denver technology services environment as outlined in the 2009 Information Technology Policy Manual. Reporting periodically to the President and Vice Presidents group, this committee would work closely with MSU Denver IT Services to create a comprehensive governance structure, including a review of the current committees, workgroups, task forces, and other information and instructional technology-related groups.

The current shared governance structure is defined by the 2009 Information Technology Policy Manual, which created three cross-college shared governance committees: the Strategic Technology Advisory Committee (STAC), the Lab Advisory Committee, and the Banner Managers Committee. The STAC committee is not currently active and would be replaced by the new Technology Strategic Oversight Committee. The Lab Advisory Committee is meeting periodically and provides oversight for services formerly funded from the student technology fee, which are those associated with the MSU Denver College-wide Computer Labs. The Banner Managers Committee meets bi-weekly to discuss a combination of technical and operational issues related to the implementation of the Banner enterprise resource planning systems.

In addition to these formal committees, there have been a variety of advisory groups, work groups, and task forces involved in IT shared governance at MSU Denver during recent years. In some cases, it is unclear which are still active and which are not, their charge, and their membership. It is unlikely all of the existing committees will need to continue.

**Information Technology Organizational Structure**

MSU Denver Information Technology Services has been through many structural changes over the last decade. It is essential that the University organize its IT services in a way that will support the implementation of the vision contemplated by the IT strategic plan and that it be broadly supported by the University community. The Task Force should consider and recommend organizational structures that would be necessary over the next 3 to 5 years to support the achievement of the goals identified in the IT strategic plan.

**Information Technology Strategic Planning Process**

As with the process for creating the MSU Denver Strategic Plan, *A Time of Transformation*, the process for developing an IT strategic plan needs to be comprehensive and inclusive of the many MSU Denver constituents as well as reflective of the diverse mission of the institution. A significant amount of feedback and information was gathered from surveys, interviews, and other sources, which ultimately resulted in a series of themes, goals, objectives, and strategies. The primary components of the plan are four strategic themes, each of which includes up to four specific goals with a series of objectives and strategies: Theme I – Student and Academic Success, Theme II – Community Engagement and Regional Stewardship (Urban Land Grant), Theme III – Institutional Culture (University Culture), and Theme IV – Institutional Resources (University Resources).

To ensure integration with the institutional priorities, it also should be directly guided by, and reflective of, *A Time of Transformation*. Specifically, the primary outcome of the technology strategic planning process should identify the systems, services, and support necessary to advance the objectives and goals identified in each of the four themes.
As a first step, it is recommended that the Information Technology Task Force conduct a comprehensive environmental scan to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) related to technology services at MSU Denver. This process should be comprehensive and create a mechanism for students, faculty, staff, alumni, and other constituents to provide feedback about their experience related to technology services at MSU Denver. In addition to new data collected from a survey, open forums, and other mechanisms, existing sources such as the campus climate survey and previous IT surveys should also be reviewed. Lastly, it is recommended that the task force review relevant best practices and trends as a way to gather additional data.

Similar to the core principles outlined in the university strategic plan, so too will the information technology strategic plan identify core themes. These may include customer service, data security, service reliability, infrastructure, communication, or priorities for new or upgraded enterprise systems and services.

In addition, data also would be categorized and grouped according to each of the four themes in *A Time of Transformation*. Though the steering committee and task force should develop and finalize the process, it is suggested that this committee create four subcommittees, or working groups, one for each of the themes identified in the MSU Denver strategic plan. These subcommittees would review the data collected as well as the specific objectives and goals identified in the university strategic plan as a way to begin defining theme-specific technology-related needs. These four subcommittees would work with a specific focus on how, and in what way, IT systems and services will advance these specific areas. Each of these subcommittees would include a representative group with specific content expertise related to the theme. In addition, each of the subcommittees would include appropriate representation from IT to support the process with expertise about current MSU Denver technology systems and services.

For example, the subcommittee addressing the theme of Community Engagement and Regional Stewardship (Urban Land Grant) would include broad representation from the Division of Advancement and External Relations, as well as appropriate representation from Academic and Student Affairs and Administration and Finance. A goal under the theme of Community Engagement and Regional Stewardship includes a strategy to define the image of the MSU Denver Neighborhood as the entryway to the Auraria Campus and as a strategic community resource with facilities and programs such as the Center for Advanced Visualization and Experiential Analysis (CAVEA), Center for Innovation, One World One Water Center for Education and Stewardship, Center for Visual Art, Center for Urban Connections, Hospitality Learning Center, and Alumni Relations Center. To support this strategy and ultimately advance the goal, the subcommittee will work to understand what types of technology systems and services are required by these various departments and projects and to advance recommendations in the planning process. The CAVEA, for example, provides a tremendous opportunity for public-private partnerships, student experiences, and the enhancement of teaching, learning, and research. It is important, however, to understand the infrastructure (data storage, software, etc.) and functionality (video conferencing, lecture capture, etc.) necessary to support the broad and diverse needs of both internal and external entities and ultimately attract them to use the facility.

Assumptions
Similar to the MSU Denver Strategic Plan, the following assumptions are implicit in this planning effort:

- We will continue to gather evidence to inform decision making, and regularly fold the results of the assessment back into campus support and the delivery of technology services.
• We will work with the established governance structure to regularly track and assess progress toward each key goal and communicate the results to the University and its constituents.
• The development and implementation of this plan will be a transparent, inclusive process, with all important planning documents available to the public via a MSU Denver IT Strategic Planning website.

Technology changes rapidly and this requires any technology strategic plan to be flexible, agile, and responsive.

Timeline
The IT Strategic Planning Process is proposed as follows:
• Planning and committee formation – Fall 2012
• Data gathering – Fall 2012/Spring 2013
• Data synthesis – Spring 2013
• Development of general principles and strategies supporting MSU Denver Strategic Plan – Spring 2013/Summer 2013

**SUMMARY OUTCOME FROM THE MSU DENVER INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TASK FORCE**

The outcome of this task force would be an IT strategic plan with set of core themes (i.e. customer service, service reliability, infrastructure, etc.) as well as specific systems, services, support, and technology initiatives corresponding to the MSU Denver Strategic Plan Themes and Goals. The MSU Denver IT Strategic Plan would then provide the technology services organization with objectives related to institutional goals, which would be implemented while working within a comprehensive shared governance structure.

**REFERENCES**
