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Executive Summary

The Information Technology Department (more commonly known as College Computing on the campus of El Centro) has undergone some substantial changes over the last 5 years and is today much more responsive and streamlined than it was in previous years. Over the last five years, IT has worked toward improvement in the area of basic fundamental IT\(^1\) practices and worked toward improving its customer service to clients. We have brought about much organization to the department which was sorely lacking and have greatly improved our general accountability and responsiveness.

We have had several re-organizations, a drastic reduction in the number of employees, a dissolution of the previous AV department, an absorption of duties therein. All the while, we have been able to improve services, reduce our need for space at the campus, consolidate our resources required, and remove redundant work from our area by installing needed technology into classrooms, offices, and conference rooms.

Over the next five year period, the IT Department, seeks to bring new technology to the college to deliver better services, in a more reliable and consistent manner as well as implement greater accountability to our area of responsibility. Our Thin Client\(^2\) (VMWare\(^3\)) initiative which started in earnest one year ago, will be a primary focus for the foreseeable future as we expand this technology deeper into classrooms and into administration. This technology enables us to deliver more consistent services to users, allows for roaming desktops, and allows us to reduce our electrical consumption as Thin Clients use a fraction of energy that traditional PCs require. The continuation of installing this new technology is our current primary technological objective but is not our only objective. There are other technology items that we are presently working on, all with the goals in mind of: reducing redundancy, consolidating systems, the removal of duplications where possible, and to deliver higher quality and more consistent service through the use of well thought out technology purchases that are genuinely beneficial to the college at its work.

\(^1\) Definition: The term IT, Information Technology and College Computing are used interchangeably within this document.

\(^2\) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thin_client

\(^3\) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/VMWare
This strategic plan aims to support the broader strategic goals of El Centro College, with the benefits to be realized by adopting it, both during and at the conclusion of the five year time frame.
Principles, Objectives and Strategies

Information Technology’s Guiding Principles

The following four principles are key statements of direction related to IT and its ability to serve as an enabler, in order to meet the needs and goals of the College as well as the IT Department itself. These guiding principles are intended to provide an environment in which the College can achieve its objectives while providing, concurrently and comprehensively, a high level of customer service. These principles are interrelated and meant to provide a cohesive approach to IT services.

1st Principle: To seek to improve the quality of support and communication faculty and staff receive

2nd Principle: To review and monitor internal processes and activities and evaluate for continued improvement and consolidation

3rd Principle: To evaluate technology investments from an enterprise investment perspective

4th Principle: To be good stewards of the IT infrastructure and other technological resources
Objectives and Strategies Related to Principles

Principle 1

*To seek to improve the quality of support and communication faculty and staff receive*

**Objective** – To establish departmental “informational sites” for the purpose of sharing and publishing commonly needed information, reducing redundant work, providing consistent information from a consistent source, and making needed information readily available.

**Strategy**

In order to improve upon customer service and the support received by faculty and staff, there will be established, a departmental informational site for each administrative department at El Centro College using the substantial investment made by DCCCD in Microsoft’s SharePoint Portal. College Computing will take a lead role in this by developing a template for other departments to follow, will aid other departments in setting up their sites, will coach and train other departments in the use of the software, and guide them through to publication.

Principle 2

*To review and monitor internal processes and activities and evaluate for continued improvement*

**Objective** – To monitor, review and evaluate service calls and practices in the IT Department to better serve clients, improve services, and adjust service levels to provide maximum benefit
Strategy

IT will begin collecting data using our investment in our SysAid Service Request Database (Help Desk System) and disseminate data collected on our information site portal in SharePoint monthly. Such data will include, but is not limited to; the amount of helpdesk tickets received in a given month, the number of issues per category of call, the number of calls per campus/building and other pertinent information derived from our database. Using this data, we will analyze and evaluate the service calls, identify trends in calls, become proactive where possible based on reviewing the data over a month to month analysis, and seek to mitigate issues at their source where possible.

Principle 3

*To view technology investments from an enterprise investment perspective*

**Objective** – Encourage, promote and advance the effective use of advantageous technologies and to ensure compatibility and long-term applicability of major purchases

**Strategies**

1. Procure technology goods and services in accordance with the current district-wide architecture standards, to stay abreast of changes in the field and upgrade and/or improve/replace applications and hardware where applicable for maximum long-term benefit

2. To view technology purchases with a critical eye toward the future and take an enterprise approach to network design, development, and maintenance, which encompasses both wide area and local area network standards and to seek to ensure network compatibility and improve network services with the most cost effective measures where possible

3. IT will strive to make applicable recommendations to appropriate parties to improve
upon the infrastructure of the network for better delivery of all IT services when and where possible

4. IT will leverage existing information technology infrastructure, software, and other resources to maximize it RIO. IT will point out/make know to users where applicable existing information technology resources that can be utilized.

**Principle 4**

*To be good stewards of the IT infrastructure and other technological resources*

**Objective** – IT will work toward greater accountability and protection of assets and inventory in conjunction with the facilities department

**Strategy**

1. IT will participate in the procurement, installation and configuration of an RFID inventory control system to better facilitate inventory control processes and to better secure and report on inventory assets. IT will work closely with the facilities department during the inventory process and during audits and IT will monitor and protect the assets in its care by tracking items being loaned, move, etc., and reporting that information freely and willingly and consistently to facilities, the inventory control officer, auditors, and any other stake holders.
Opportunities and Challenges

Opportunities

Our investment in VMWare - Due to recently implemented technology (VMWare) we have the opportunity to reduce redundant work, enhance desktop services to faculty, staff and students, and deliver a better (more flexible) desktop experience than was previously possible.

New Leadership - Recent new leadership at the school gives us the opportunity to re-think processes that are lacking in efficiency and help us establish strong working relationships within multiple departments.

Challenges

Vulnerabilities associated with not implementing a comprehensive strategic plan, include but are not limited to: Making it more difficult to:

1. Insufficient Notice - College Computing is generally given short notice (at times no notice) about important projects, office moves, remodels, speaking engagements that need support, etc. This poses a challenge for us to respond to important requests when we have little to - no notice.

2. Lack of Incentives - There are few (if any) incentives for employees to do better or perform at their maximum capacity. This is a serious challenge in a lean staff environment. Retaining responsible employees is a challenge due to a shortage of incentives and low salary. Management must be creative and develop strong bonds with staff to curtail apathy.

3. Scope Creep - Instructors and staff often ask for College Computing to become involved in areas outside of our scope of work. We have to walk a fine line between being supportive and not getting out of scope.
4. Cross Training - Cross Training is a challenge due to having lean staff and the limited ability to trade or rotate staff into new areas or remote campuses. Over time staff members become specialized to various floors, buildings, departments, labs, etc., which to a large degree is unavoidable.

Strengths and Weaknesses

*Strengths*

1. From an internal perspective, currently the IT Department is staffed with technological competent individuals who are responsive to the needs of the college.
2. Our educational infrastructure (educational servers and the corresponding functions they serve) which are aging, are about to be replaced with state of the art blade array server system. This will enable us to reduce the number of servers we have to house, support, and allow us to do more with less and reduce our footprint and associated resources needed.
3. The educational computers in labs throughout the college have been updated with Thin Client technology in the last 12 months which allows us to deliver consistent desktop experiences to our students without traditional PC problems. With this new technology, we are able to deliver classroom software services extremely quickly and allow for classrooms to be used for multiple disciplines.
4. We are now poised to deliver this new technology to the administrative side of our network creating advantages for faculty and staff, reducing costs to the college, and enhancing data security.
5. We are continually seeking new (functional) technology to enhance our services to El Centro College and its faculty, staff and students.
Weaknesses

1. Absenteeism - DCCCD is incredibly generous in the amount of time provided to employees for excused absenteeism. Because we operate a *lean* staff, absenteeism can quickly become a weakness in our department. In a lean staff environment, absenteeism can create difficulties and consequently, we need to find ways to encourage attendance and keep absenteeism to a minimum.

2. Our Dependency on District Service Center - Another weakness in our department is our dependency on the services of the District Service Center in Mesquite. The service level provided to us by District Service Center (DSC) can either bolster us toward our goals or delay us in reaching them. Since the network and the services on it are varied and many resources are controlled by DSC, we are to a large extent, at their mercy for services. Their level of customer service directly impacts us and what we are able to accomplish during any given period of time or during any given project involving them. Often times we are in a holding pattern waiting on DSC to complete a task or provide us with information.
Technological Goals

What we must do:

1. Our network infrastructure needs updating and improvement. For example, some areas in the building(s) have old cabling, old switches and routers, and other outdated hardware. This will limit our ability to push out VMWare across the El Centro environment as well as inhibit other digital services. The C Building is particularly poor in its current state of connectivity as well as some areas of the A Building and some areas of the BJP Building. As El Centro moves more and more to a Cloud based environment, it is imperative that the state of our network is robust and sufficient.

2. Our educational servers (of which there are 30) are nearing their hardware end of life cycle and we need to move to a new Blade Array Platform that would allow us to consolidate our existing server environment into a smaller, more cost efficient system while providing us a way to expand easily in the future.

3. We need to implement VMWare/Thin Client technology further into the educational network. Currently we are running 60% Virtual Labs and 40% traditional PC Labs.

4. We need to implement VMWare/Thin Client technology into the administrative network. The ability to provide a Cloud based desktop (that follows them from machine to machine) would give the administrative users a powerful tool that has not been available until now.

Technological edge:

1. To purchase and install new laser projectors where applicable and possible as replacements for “bulb” projectors.

2. To research and possibly implement 3D Printing into some of our school programs.

3. To participate in the purchase, installation and deployment of an RFID inventory control solution.
4. To participate in the setup and installation of SMART Boards in various classrooms throughout the college.

5. To seek a comprehensive solution regarding our multi-faceted digital signage.

6. To continue with our deployment of digital security cameras throughout the college.

7. Explore moving classrooms away from Crestron to possible tablet based controls for classrooms.

Programmatic Goals

1. To have representation at the IT Council monthly meetings and to be an advocate for El Centro College in relation to technical matters and to assert the needs of the College

2. To have representation at the IPSO Council monthly meetings held at DSC and disseminate appropriate information to stakeholders and appropriate parties

3. To participate regularly in weekly Facilities meetings to share information and seek common solutions and develop a positive working relationship between departments

4. To self-report on College Computing’s activities, work load, and services provided to the college

5. To participate in the dissemination of security related information

6. To participate in the regular collection of data through various means for review and for purposes of enhancing services

7. To provide, where possible and appropriate, training for staff that relates specifically to their jobs and to provide staff professional development opportunities
**Budgetary Items (Currently Known)**

These figures represent per campus expenditures regarding future investment. Some projects involve multiple campuses and consolidated quotes. These figures are only meant to serve as an estimate and guidepost for budgeting and informational purposes. They are presented in an À la carte manner for readability and due to the fact that funding sources for some projects still remain undetermined.