

REPORT ON AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY AND ITS SUPPORT AT PURCHASE COLLEGE

**Presented by the Provost's Task Force on Instructional Technology
May, 2007**

Introductory Note

Dear Elizabeth:

The Task Force on Instructional Technology Support is delighted to share its findings and recommendations with you in the pages that follow. Throughout the spring semester we: met, elicited data from on campus, surveyed other colleges, spoke with colleagues both on and off campus, debated the pros and cons of differing technologies and support structures, assessed current conditions on campus with attention to what is working and what is not working, looked into a crystal ball to divine future needs, and generally attempted to arrive at an informed set of recommendations.

We have by no means exhausted every possibility, but we have looked at what works elsewhere as well as what makes sense for Purchase, given our fiscal constraints, size, and scope. You will find no "Grand Schemes" and no teleological arguments about future inevitabilities. Our humility is grounded in the knowledge that the area that we have been asked to examine is subject to continual evolution and change with recent developments often obviating past imperatives. What we have set forth for your review is an integrated set of proposals as well as some working methods to facilitate attaining these goals. In examining need, we have kept pedagogy front and center.

As a general observation, the Task Force noted that many things with respect to educational technology are being done well and we have attempted to respect and keep best practices in place while seeking to fill in the gaps in instructional technology support that clearly exist. Once you have had an opportunity to review our report, we would welcome an opportunity to share our observations and thoughts with you in person at a meeting to be scheduled at your convenience during the month of June.

Sincerely,

Patrick Callahan
Jon Esser, Chair
Jeanine Meyer
Ted Piltzecker
Jon Rubin
Robert Stein
Michelle Stewart
Wayne TeBrake

Report of the Provost's Task Force on Instructional Technology

Executive Summary

The Task Force notes that chronic under funding of instructional technology (IT) has severely limited the college's ability to deliver essential services in support of the curriculum. A survey of current conditions reveals: lack of adequate numbers of "Smart" Classrooms, lack of adequate software licenses (both in terms of requisite applications and numbers of computer stations licensed to run them), overly long hardware and software replacement and upgrade cycles, the chronic inability to consider and fund new initiatives, etc. All of these conditions can only be overcome by significantly greater allocation of resources both over the near and longer term.

CTS provides the technical infrastructure – wiring, wireless access across campus, as well as ever-expanding administrative functions – that, because it is infrastructure, is often taken for granted, like functioning electric lights. The services it provides are vital and CTS has made considerable progress in the last few years. The CTS staff work primarily 'behind the scenes' and with each other, and when they do provide direct services, such as through the help desk, it is mainly conducted over the phone by a faceless staff of young and constantly changing people who often move on to other jobs. Their technical focus remains the dominant criteria for their employment. It would be ineffectual and inappropriate to move functions involving pedagogical and curricular matters directly into this milieu, but CTS needs to sharpen its focus in the area of academic computing to better facilitate the integration of technology into the broader campus-wide discourse.

CIR provides, within its area of expertise, direct support for the pedagogical and curricular needs of faculty and that support is given face-to-face by the same people over time. In response to our survey of CIR and instructional technology use in the classroom, CIR received consistently high marks from faculty. This direct interaction between faculty members and people experienced in the integration of technology to support, improve and enhance teaching and learning represents an important model of close alignment between pedagogy and technology that needs to become a goal for the college as a whole. Of course, face-to-face support cannot be sustained in all situations, so the appropriate and sensitive use of social software tools must also be integrated into the support structure itself.

The faculty express a strong need for more "Smart" Classrooms across campus, with the definition of "Smart" Classroom variable across units. Designing these classrooms and defining priorities for their propagation requires expertise and faculty input. The current mode of operation of these classrooms, where CIR staff members open and close each cabinet, will not scale up and needs to be replaced by a self-service model with either swipe cards or key access provided to faculty who use the facility. The maintenance of the equipment and infrastructure in these classrooms and in any general access labs should be transferred to CTS inasmuch as these facilities are part of the computing infrastructure of the campus.

Purchase College has a mixed mode of centralized and decentralized technology support. Some units, because their technical needs are specialized and greater or because access to new technologies arose earlier as a curricular need, have their own small, dedicated local staff. We strongly recommend that this mode of operation continue because it will always be the case that some units have specialized needs. However, more could be done in the form of regular face-to-face meetings and technology supported interactions (newsletters, blogs, wikis) to connect the localized technical staff members with each other and with the faculty who use these specialized facilities so that they can share experiences and achieve economies of scale in product and service contracts.

The task force members strongly recommend that a Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology (TLT) be set up as soon as practically possible, headed by a Director of Instructional Technology (DIT), with adequate facilities and staff to provide technology guidance and support for pedagogical and curricular needs of the faculty. This center also will help connect the decentralized instructional technology support staff members. Certain CIR functions, which will be discussed in the body of the report, will go to this center. More generally, there was considerable support for broadening the scope of this center to provide a unified approach to faculty development and support.

During the latter half of the semester, faculty and students were surveyed to evaluate their current use of academic technology and to gather their opinions about what works and what doesn't. While the faculty survey had a fairly high overall rate of response, certain units (Art+Design and Dance, in particular) were very underrepresented. One of the clearest outcomes of the faculty survey was how little many faculty members know about instructional technology and how far we will have to go to provide a common base of knowledge across campus

As the taskforce began its deliberations we sought to learn how other colleges have responded to new technology and how it has been integrated into their academic and administrative structures. Above all, the experiences of our sister and brother schools of SUNY provided important guidance. They spoke about the need to keep focused on pedagogy - so that faculty do not find the technological tail wagging the academic dog. But they also indicated that to develop this holistic approach there had to be an institutional commitment to providing resources for faculty development and growth. As all of the SUNY campuses we used as references were somewhat comparable to Purchase College (none were university centers or community colleges) we have taken their recommendations to heart in preparing this report. The taskforce makes the following specific recommendations:

1. Proposal for a Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology

The taskforce felt it critical that Purchase College have a facility that would effectively invite faculty to participate in the development of a technologically enhanced curriculum. We propose that Purchase College create a Center for Teaching Learning and Technology (TLT) as a “big tent” that would include: a Center for Instructional Technology, headed by a Director of Instructional Technology, with a staff that initially would consist of a Multimedia Instructional Designer (MID); an Office of Media Production Services (MPS - presently CIR) whose present secretarial support could be shared with the other units in the TLT center; and other campus entities engaged in technologically enhanced initiatives such as the COIL Center and the staff that currently administers Blackboard. There was also strong support among the members of the taskforce that an Office of Faculty Development, headed by a Coordinator drawn from the faculty, but working closely with the UUP, be integrated directly into the center.

A key component in preparing for the needs of the future will be the creation of the TLT Center. This should consist of a well-equipped space for instruction and demonstration where the faculty can go individually or in groups to learn to use new and available technology to enhance and develop their own work and their pedagogy as well as work space for a director and appropriate staff. The TLT Center will include adequate physical place for a computer lab/classroom, an equipment storeroom, a meeting room with support for video conferencing, staff offices, etc. The task force recommends that a portion of the lower level of the Library be used to house the center. The Library is the central locus of virtually all documents in support of the college’s curricula. As the Library mounts more and more digital resources for faculty use, it makes increasing sense that faculty training in both access and deployment of digital media take place under its aegis.

There should be a Director of Instructional Technology (DIT) who will be largely responsible for coordination of already existing instructional technology on campus and for the introduction and dissemination of information, and general leadership of the faculty in exploring and adopting new possibilities. One of the Director’s principal activities will be advocating for administrative and external support for the integration of new technology into the ongoing workings of the college, including curriculum development. Administration and support of Blackboard will move to this center, although a critical job for the center to undertake immediately will be to investigate alternatives to Blackboard. More generally, an on-going job for the center director and staff will be to investigate new products and technologies. The expertise, services and resources housed in the TLT provide justification for a critical mass of staff.

The DIT should meet regularly—at least monthly—with the Directors of Technical Support at CTS, the Library, CIR, and other relevant technical support staff dispersed around the academic units of the college to share information, development, and planning and to coordinate all efforts involving instructional technology. The Director should be supported by appropriate tech personnel, including a new hire – a Multimedia

Instructional Designer (MID) —and clerical staffing (see section below entitled: Center for Faculty Development).

The process of technologically enhancing existing courses and developing new courses that take advantage of new digital tools will require both considerable re-orientation of our faculty to new possibilities and then working with them to actually redesign their courses. It will be the job of the Director of Instructional Technology to investigate, promote and disseminate pedagogically valuable models, but it would not be reasonable to expect this same person to also work with many faculty members to re-invent their individual courses. In fact, this is the job description of a multimedia instructional designer (MID). Such a person is trained to work with faculty who often will not have the requisite technical skills to redesign their own courses, but who can gradually pick up these skills with experience. In our conversations with other SUNY comprehensive colleges we found that there were typically two or three such designers working fulltime under their equivalent of our DIT on each campus. We feel that the appointment of the DIT should be linked to that person's authority to immediately hire a MID or we believe the DIT will simply not be able to carry out their mandate.

Among the functions of the Director of Instructional Technology, the taskforce identifies the following:

- Interface with CIR/CTS/ITAC/Provost/External Affairs/Deans/Faculty
- Chair ITAC
- Function as a campus 'Guru' with knowledge of (inter)national developments in IT
- Convene regular meetings among all the principals involved in the support and delivery of technology on campus (monthly meetings during academic year, possible summer retreats)
- Attend monthly meetings of instructional technology support staff (including discipline-specific, decentralized staff) chaired by the Assistant Director of Academic Computing (see below).
- Advocate for the needs and IT support solutions for any and all academic units without their own tech support
- Promote faculty awareness of instructional technology potentials
- Determine strategies for student access to instructional technology equipment (video, cameras, audio recording, editing and post production)
- Set immediate and long term strategies for IT support
- Develop faculty 'drop in' tech training access
- Develop IT training courses for faculty
- Develop strategy to service casual use of technology (non full-semester use)
- Expand video/audio resources for general access (which might be provided by: CIT, CIR, Library, or New Media)
- Develop timeline for “Smart” Classroom configuration and implementation for all instructional spaces
- Support ongoing curricular use of vital analog and other media (16mm film, audiotape, etc.) currently provided and supported by CIR and not available in the current configuration of smart consoles.

2. Proposal for a Center for Faculty Development

The Committee entered into a spirited debate with regard to exceeding our charge in light of IT models at other institutions. In particular, we noted that at many campuses a TLT unit often provides faculty development support as well. There was significant support for the synergy resulting from including in the TLT an Office of Faculty Development, headed by a Coordinator drawn from the faculty, but working closely with the UUP. Purchase College does not currently have a centralized resource for faculty development and the TLT Director might usefully be conjoined by a Director of Faculty Development, thereby consolidating two separate but at times overlapping objectives (faculty development and instructional technology support). The charge for the Coordinator of Faculty Development might include:

- Promote faculty awareness of instructional technology potentials
- Run workshops
- Provide guidance and support during reviews of junior faculty leading to promotion and tenure
- Provide guidance and support for faculty in Grant Writing
- Provide an orientation to Purchase College for new faculty
- Support initiatives in pedagogy

3. Support of Video in the Curriculum

Most video production at Purchase College is offered through academic coursework in at least three different program areas, each of which is supported by a dedicated staff. CIR also currently provides short video workshop training sessions to students along with inventory management as part of several classes, primarily in LAS. Video production and post-production appear to be a significant growth area for the college in the near future, but broadening access to video could be extremely costly, thus making this initiative particularly needful of careful consideration. Several units on campus have long standing heuristic knowledge and their expertise should be called upon. We see the critical need for broader access to video technology as urgently requiring its own Taskforce composed with adequate representation of the relevant stakeholders: CIR, A+D, Film, Cinema Studies, New Media, Journalism, Media Society and the Arts, etc. We suggest that Wayne TeBrake and Jon Esser form such a Taskforce since its objectives are in keeping with the mission of the Center for Integrative Studies. We recommend that this taskforce begin its work as soon as is practically possible.

4. Developing “Smart” Classrooms

We unanimously and strongly recommend that the college launch an initiative to convert most instructional spaces on campus into technologically enhanced facilities as soon as possible. There are 35 classrooms in Humanities, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences buildings. About a third are currently "smart" meaning that they have Internet connections, mounted projectors and speakers, smart boards, and a teacher podium

containing a computer and DVD/VHS player. The registrar reports that demand to teach in smart classrooms far exceeds the supply. 80% of faculty survey respondents judged teaching in a “Smart” Classroom to be “very important.”

When “Smart” Classrooms are not available, faculty use Mobile Teaching Units (MTUs). In fall 2006, CIR delivered 397 MTUs to classrooms — double the deliveries as compared to fall 2004. Some academic units (e.g., Natural Sciences) also have their own MTUs. According to the CIR Director, “the staff of CIR spends a high percentage of time delivering equipment to locations across the campus, often working as a team.” While this is economical in terms of equipment, it is costly in terms of labor, particularly as demand grows.

The average cost of conversion to a “Smart” room has been \$15,000 per classroom. That cost could vary based on the exact configuration of the rooms and choice of components. The estimated cost of converting all classrooms would be approximately \$400,000.

We recommend the following action items:

- Charge ITAC, the existing committee for technology relating to pedagogy, to:
 1. Examine the definition of what technology is needed in technologically enhanced classrooms, taking into account distance learning and the varying needs of the different boards of study.
 2. Determine the number of such classrooms required in the Arts buildings, and the appropriate configurations.
 3. Upgrade the quality of projection in the currently smart rooms (this was a problem noted in the faculty survey). This is critical for art history, art & design, and cinema studies, among others.
 4. Design the rooms to be turn-key or swipe card facilities that usually can be operated by faculty members without the assistance of a technician.
- Work with the Provost and other vice-presidents to develop a financial strategy utilizing a variety of funding sources, state, tech fee, grants, donors, and capital, to accomplish the project.

5. The Role of CIR in Relation to Instructional Support

The task force recommends that CIR continue as a unit to provide campus wide production and special event services. Moreover, we anticipate that these services will increase markedly in coming years. We recommend, too, that it continue with “Smart” equipment circulation (MTU’s) in the near term, until most classrooms become technologically enhanced.

CIR has an important role in providing A/V media support for the college including access to analog equipment since digital technologies will not necessarily cover all of our needs. For example, it is clear that film projection will be needed by Cinema Studies and some other Boards of Study including Anthropology and Dance that have purchased 16mm prints, laser disks, or other media not widespread enough to require permanent installations in upgraded classrooms. This need is not large enough to be part of the move to technologically enhanced classrooms in general, yet it is vital to meet. CIR should to continue to meet this need within their production services mandate.

CIR has until now been responsible for the delivery of library materials including DVD's (media "software") and other media to class; this important task should either remain with CIR or become a regular part of library services.

Until a proposal for the future support of video is complete, CIR must also continue to be responsible for flexible mini-courses on using video equipment for academic projects. In addition, CIR might conduct video training and other forms of A/V training for the faculty of Cinema Studies, Media Society and the Arts, and the faculty of other media-intensive programs.

As noted in the summary, CIR is most frequently praised for its immediate availability to trouble-shoot classroom problems, reliable scheduling of equipment testing and repair (checking bulbs in projectors, internet connections on smart consoles, software availability and function — etc.). The college definitely needs a way to ensure that valuable class time is never wasted on malfunctioning, under-serviced equipment. As such, CIR should be engaged in the development of systems guaranteeing immediate support of instructional technology 'crises'. CIR staff should manage and form the core of an Instructional Technology Emergency Response Team (ITERT) that will be assembled to address problems at a moment's notice and serve as a transitional force in the movement from the current arrangement to a campus with fully technologically enhanced classrooms. The task force notes that there is a significant qualitative difference between a faculty member experiencing problems with a personal computer and one who is before a group of undergraduates unable to conduct class due to a problem involving classroom technology. CIR's track record is exemplary in this regard and their practices need to be transferred to the portion of CTS responsible for technical support of classroom and lab equipment (see below).

6. The Role of CTS in Relation to Instructional Support

As noted in the executive summary, CTS is engaged in comprehensive support of the entire campus community's needs with regard to computing and telecommunications of which instructional technology represents only a small component.

As our taskforce began to codify proposed new structures and changes to those that existed we remained concerned that CTS, as presently configured, would not be able to play the expanded role in academic support that we were considering delegating to it.

We were concerned about the limits of the CTS help desk, which many faculty presently feel does not meet their needs and with the lack of academic perspective and faculty access at CTS. Instructional technology support through CTS needs to become more personalized and more helpful than the current helpdesk model. At first we thought that this could be mitigated by the appointment of a Director of Instructional Technology, but as we developed our model it became clearer that there also had to be significant change within CTS.

We looked at the organizational chart that Bill Junor had provided us and soon focused on the position of the Assistant Director of Technical Support. We returned to the recommendations received from our colleagues on other campuses that academic computing be developed as a coherent link within our IT area and we re-conceptualized this position to become an Assistant Director of Academic Computing (ADAC). We are therefore NOT advocating the establishment of an entirely new position, but the shift of an existing position to a new area of focus and responsibility.

The ADAC would continue to be responsible for the help desk, but this person would now be directly responsible for faculty input and would be expected to become a public face of CTS to the faculty. No longer would the Director of CTS be the only person at CTS that faculty meet or have access to, and no longer would the help desk be a rotating cast of unseen characters at the other end of a phone call. The ADAC would be an accessible person for faculty when help desk problems occurred, would meet regularly with the Director of Instructional Technology, and would also be responsible for bringing all of the discipline specific techs together for monthly meetings – meetings which the Director of Instructional Technology would also attend. The ADAC would also be the person at CTS responsible for the proper installation and maintenance of technologically enhanced classrooms and would manage the emergency response team described elsewhere.

The relationship of the ADAC to the DIT would be somewhat as hardware is to software, creating a synergy that would facilitate CTS becoming more responsive through the work of the ADAC, while the DIT and his office would keep the faculty informed about what was technically possible and help them integrate these new developments into their teaching. Instead of an uneasy cohabitation of two cultures that often act almost totally alien to each other, the ACAD and the DIT could begin a long and necessary process of acculturation. One fruitful outcome of CTS's tech support unit collaborating with the DIT will be a better understanding of pedagogy on the part of CTS which will serve the campus's needs more appropriately when training is offered to support staff on the wide array of software used for administrative needs (SMRT, ISIS, PAWS, Recruitment+, Scholarship Database, Razor's Edge, Microsoft Office, etc.).

7. The Role of Individual Academic Units in Relation to Instructional Support

Several academic units have considerable expertise in particular areas (circulation of video cameras for courses, post-production of video, audio production and post production, digital imaging, etc.). As a result of the particular history of Purchase College, some academic units have their own technology support staff (Natural Science, Film, Music, Art+Design), while others have been served by CIR (primarily via the Humanities and the general purpose labs in the library). We recommend building on the success and relative faculty and student satisfaction of those units that have their own tech support staff, and adapting this model to the Library and Humanities labs. The infrastructure and hardware in these labs should be installed and maintained by CTS. The management and support of the labs should be in the hands of someone directly responsible to the units involved: whether this means actually reporting to the Dean or Director of the unit, or whether the lab manager will be part of a centralized unit (CIR, CTS, TLT) will need to be worked out. What is important is that the management and support of the lab “have a face,” as one member of the task force put it, for the faculty, staff, and students who are dependent on the smooth functioning of the facility. The DIT will work closely with the distributed technical support staff to propagate best practices across the campus while also creating an awareness of new trends as well as existing centralized resources that faculty in some units may not have a critical awareness of. Through chairing of ITAC, the DIT will keep track of individual unit’s technological needs and advocate for all academic units on campus.

8. The Role of Student Affairs in Relation to Instructional Support

Student Affairs initiatives offer an important adjunct to curricular activities. The campus should consider useful coordination of non-academic student access and use of audio and video production and post production facilities in such areas as PTV and WPUR, both of which may find linkages to curricular initiatives.

Conclusions

The task force recommends:

- A significant and ongoing increase of funding in support of IT needs on campus
- The creation of a Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology (TLT) in the lower level of the library with: a Director (DIT), Multimedia Instructional Designer (MID) and adequate operating budget and staffing
- Propagation of technology enhanced classrooms on a reasoned schedule, as funding permits, and with adequate assessment of divergent faculty needs in recognition that cookie cutter solutions have not been universally successful on campus. This is the reason we do not use the term 'smart'.
- The creation of a task force to assess curricular video needs
- The creation of an Instructional Technology Emergency Response Team (ITERT) with staffing drawn potentially from CIR and CTS under the supervision of an Assistant Director of Academic Computing (ADAC) working in close coordination with CIR and the DIT
- The addition of a Faculty Development component to the TLT Center
- That CIR continue to manage classroom A/V services and all of those not accommodated by smart consoles (analog media, 16 mm, multi-region and multi-format players, and other special projection/playback needs)
- That CIR form a significant force during the transition to a more technologically enhanced campus (filling those needs not satisfied by the current configuration nor by the developing configuration of classroom technologies)

Glossary of Some of Purchase's IT Acronyms:

ADAC	Assistant Director of Academic Computing
CIR	Center for Instructional Resources
CTS	Computing and Telecommunications Services
DIT	Director of Instructional Technology
IT	Instructional Technology
ITAC	Instructional Technology Advisory Committee
ITERT	Instructional Technology Emergency Response Team
MID	Multimedia Instructional Designer
MPS	Media Production Services
MTU	Mobile Teaching Unit
TLT	Teaching Learning and Technology