GRAINGER COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING it GOVERNANCE – ADMINISTRATIVE WORKING GROUP

Academic Year 2023-2024 Final Report

Thank you for the opportunity to work with The Grainger College of Engineering on the Engineering IT Governance Administrative Working Group. Our committee met six times over the academic year with the intention to meet one more time in June and submits the following report of our activities:

- Application Development and Expansion of Portal Apps Across Campus
  - In total, 8 applications have been rolled out to campus
    - VSL 2.0 is in test
    - Chart 2.0 will start in the fall
    - 230 new units to apps have been added to our campus apps over the last year
    - Gradapps will be sunset in 2028 in favor of Slate which is a campus tool
  - The committee looked at other applications that have a lot of use outside of Engineering
    - We recommend that Directory, Keys, Advising, and Purchasing be the next applications considered for elevation.
      - Keys app added 33 new units last year (660% increase)
      - Purchasing added 11 new units last year (46% increase)
    - EngrIT is talking with NCSA to see where there are commonalities for future applications where EngrIT could build upon what already exists.
    - Future considerations here may be defining metrics that would help guide us to determining when an application should be considered for release to campus.
  - Future projects include Student Success portal, Named Faculty Appointment, Faculty Workload Equity, Service Billing, Shared Facilities, Governance Tracking and Evaluations.
    - We need to assist EngrIT in connecting with the right experts when building an app to clearly define user requirements from the start and ensure that an invested person is available to assist and test throughout the process.
  - Even with the growth of applications, both officially released to campus and those apps that are gaining momentum from units outside of Engineering, the help tickets submitted to app dev has decreased by 23% over the last two years. Decrease is due to customer focused efforts, personalized training and identifying recurring issues.
- Operational Excellence
  - Working on Operational Excellence with campus has benefited Engineering as Jim has been given the opportunity to represent GCOE needs on campus level committees. This coming year, Jim will transition from the Operational Excellence Committee to the Strategic Plan Committee.
  - The things that should be managed centrally by campus are those that produce economies of scale, need to be "five 9s" reliable or have high security, IT items that nearly everyone on campus uses the same way and are a utility or commodity such as email and calendaring.

- o The switch to VM and storage managed by Tech Services has started off well, there was no end-user visibility, EngrIT has maintained admin level access while saving some money because campus is funding some salary. This move has also helped to reduce the scope for EngrIT. Other items offered through partnership with campus include the Wiki, Kaltura for lecture recordings, Research storage (from NCSA), and cybersecurity efforts.
  - o Other items to consider moving would be digital signage, IT manages the computers, but Communications manages content. Classroom support could move, but equipment would have to be campus standard equipment rather than unit specific. This would need to be discussed further and potentially lead to some classrooms under campus management and some retained by GCOE.
- Engineering IT funding model
  - o A major concern developed late in FY23 due to Government Costing's concerns over the budget model for billing. Costing is demanding justification for staff time allocations, it is not good enough for staff to make an annual estimate of how they spend their time. Accounting for time in a detailed way will cause staff aggravation and may not be entirely possible to achieve. If we cannot satisfy Government Costing, the current model for billing units and research grants will not be possible.
  - o The model was revised in FY24 to address concerns, this resulted in 19 service lines being removed from the funding model and leaving just 16 service lines in addition to 6 lines that do not have salary associated with them (i.e. hardware)
  - o Advantages
    - ▪ Simpler bills for units to review
    - ▪ Lower administrative overhead on EngrIT staff (reporting, LD changes…)
    - ▪ Less chance of errors in processing
  - o Disadvantages
    - ▪ Less transparent where costs really go
    - ▪ Harder to make informed decisions about investments or cuts
    - ▪ less differentiation between units – less choice
  - o In the end, no unit's bill was impacted more than 10% due to the change in the model
- Customer Service Survey
  - o While the Customer Service Survey continues to provide important information, the response rate continues to decline. Only 194 responses were received, but that is up from last year.
  - o The overall rating was 4.09 out of 5, consistent with prior years
  - o EngrIT implemented a TDX (ticket system) survey in order to receive an immediate response after interactions with EngrIT. 299 Comments were received through January through this survey mechanism which is over 100 more responses than the annual survey.
  - o Now that EngrIT staff has been split into four pods, it may be valuable to try to determine if there are meaningful differences between the pods. From this data, could you see a problem in one area or export good things from one pod into another?
  - o Using the TDX surveys, EngrIT was also able to dedicate responses to unsatisfied or unresolved responses in the hopes to improve service and ultimately resolve the issue.
- Hiring Plan
  - o No new positions are being proposed for this year, EngrIT will try to fill vacancies.
    - ▪ 4 User support – 3 searches already in process
    - ▪ 1 IT Specialist in Research support

- 1 more senior A/V hire – This is a vacancy, but a higher level. Luther is the only one who is experienced, so he's in the rooms getting equipment to work rather than coordinating projects which he needs to do.
                - Replace Apps Manager with entry level App Developer – somewhat less expensive $75 vs $90. Get a much better pool at the developer level.
                - Data Analysis position that is vacant and will remain vacant
- Budget
    - In FY24 EngrIT did a significant amount of work to review the services they are providing to determine if they are doing the right things and if they are doing them in the right way.
    - This generated 118 pages of information and data across 6 groups. EngrIT will have a retreat this summer to review the outstanding questions from the reports and to determine paths forward.
    - Because this retreat hasn't occurred, there is a significant amount of things to be determined.
    - Changes/resolutions that are certain:
        - Drop at least 2 positions
        - Resolve methodology for research support billing
        - Will complete our endpoint security project – This was a limited time position to address the audit finding for machines that were not on the security purview of EngrIT. Most PIs were accepting of the proposed addition of security, so students were able to then implement the security patches.
        - Increased cost for MATLAB and some external outlays – MATLAB has been a threat for years, finally increasing cost over several years
        - Proposal for addressing GPU computing for instructional needs – Students need to be able to have classes on GPUs to graduate with the needed skills, especially with increased AI. Needs to be Cloud based, but campus and vendors aren't necessarily set up to go to a Cloud model.
- Emerging topics that were discussed
    - AI Products
        - The release of many new AI products has researchers clamoring to use AI tools. How can EngrIT help faculty and staff to understand the options and costs of AI tools? We would like to see Engineering leading this area. We thought it would be beneficial for EngrIT to talk with CEBA and then send an email to faculty.
    - Facilitation Services
        - Michael Chan is leading this effort which began as internal to IT, but has since expanded to the college strategic plan, MatSE and a few external to GCOE.
        - No other services are being sacrificed in order to provide this service as it is currently a low time commitment. It is important to ensure that core services are covered before providing ancillary services.
        - Currently EngrIT isn't charging for this service, however If these services are expanded, we will need to figure out how to charge for them under the new funding model structure.
        - In general, the committee feels that this service is not relevant to the core mission of Engineering IT. We recommend that this service be thoroughly vetted with leadership to determine if this should continue to be offered. If there is additional bandwidth in the department, there are other key services (i.e. AV

support and app development) that require additional focus and support rather than providing effort on facilitation services.

- o Meeting Structure
    - We have been doing a lot of presentations focused on metrics and data to the committee from Jim and his area leads. While this can be beneficial, we have concluded that this model has been more reactionary than advisory. For instance, the committee was not aware of internal discussions related to AI products and Facilitation Services until the college-wide announcements were made.
    - For future meetings, we will shorten presentations and have more open discussion time to talk about IT changes
    - In addition, recommendations from other committees should be brought promptly to be reviewed by the Administration Committee prior to implementation. We should continue our standard discussion topics for the year such as budget.

In conclusion, this governance board is committed to supporting and positioning Engineering IT to be a driving force on campus for change and efficiency. Expanding on partnerships with campus will help to ensure that the needs of GCOE are considered in critical infrastructure.

Respectfully Submitted:
Karen Cromwell (CSL and Committee Chair)
Tessa Hile (Eng Admin)
Emad Jassim (Engr Admin)
Catherine Somers (ECE)
Kris Williams (MRL)
Lori Willoughby (Eng Admin)