GRAINGER COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING it GOVERNANCE – ADMINISTRATIVE WORKING GROUP

Academic Year 2024-2025 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 seven times over the academic year and submits the following report of our activities:

- Application Development
    - In total, 8 applications have been rolled out to campus
        - VSL 2.0 is in test for employee/supervisor functionality and in development for HR user functionality – expected rollout Fall 2025/Spring 2026
        - Named Faculty Appointments has been rolled out to the Dean's Office
        - Chart 2.0 will start in the fall
        - Rewriting apps in .net will make future updates across apps easier
    - Future projects include Student Success portal, Faculty Workload Equity, Service Billing, Shared Facilities, Governance Tracking and Student "Early Alert" report.
        - 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 continue to decline.
- Customer Service Survey
    - This topic was not covered this year.
- Hiring Plan
    - No new positions are being proposed for this year, EngrIT will try to fill vacancies.
        - Josh Potts moved back from Marcomm because he's a hard-core programmer $130K increase to IT budget, but decrease in the Marcomm budget
        - Darius was 50% Tech Services last year, back fully w EngrIT
        - Filled many long-standing vacancies particularly in User Support and A/V
- Budget
    - IT is continuing the budget model from last year of collapsing service categories together. This makes budgeting easier but makes granular reporting of how staff is spending their time harder.
    - In anticipation of reduced budgets in the coming years, EngrIT has continued to practice restraint and has discussed where potential budget cuts could be made. Good team discussions were had and there was support across EngrIT units for the units that cannot afford to take the budgetary hits.
    - Positions were analyzed to determine if they become vacant, would they need to be filled or can they be left open for a period.
    - They also understand the need to find recurring savings

- What is the ROI on system warranties? Is it potentially better to over purchase hardware instead of investing in warranties?
- Perform an audit of our VM/Storage spend with a goal of at least 10% reduction
- Freeze Asst Director for Infrastructure position $110K
- Fill system admin vacancy internally $85K
- Sunset our GA position in Analytics - $26K
- Emerging topics that were discussed
  - AV Refresh
    - Engineering IT revisited and presented a proposal to add AV to a replacement program much like the Desktop or Laptop replacement.
    - Such a program would allow Engineering IT to standardize across the college, making the user experience more uniform.
    - Options for the program included both classrooms and conference rooms, but overwhelmingly, it was the classrooms that people felt were the current priority, but a "menu" of sorts be available to standardize conference rooms as units are willing and able.
    - Projected costs are approximately $400K per year, a budget model would have to be developed for funding, would this be split with the college? Funded by the unit housing the room? Based on the academic unit of students taking classes in rooms?
    - While everyone agreed that there are AV projects that need to be done and that it would be a good idea to have a defined set of equipment options for classrooms or conference rooms, now is not the right time to launch a program due to budgetary constraints. Only the most critical rooms should be addressed now.
  - Data Analytics
    - There were three major takeaways from the analytics discussion. First is the need to involve experts in the field (i.e. HR or Finance) in the development and implementation of reporting. Data fields are not standardized and are complex. Second, we don't want to see a duplication of efforts across campus. We need to leverage what exists or is being developed on campus. Third, we feel we have the same discussions each year without result.
    - There has been a lot of engagement with the Undergrad Programs office, but not as much with finance or HR.
    - Challenges that have been encountered come from lack of engagement or taking over reports that were written by previous students or employees and having to rewrite reports.
    - One underlying concern is gaining an understanding of who this is helping and how charges are being allocated.
  - AI
    - EngrIT has a page on their website to help guide people to what's available AI Consulting | Engineering IT Shared Services | Illinois
    - Most of these services put everything you put into the software on their servers, so your data is being used to help improve their models, so make sure it's open research. Copilot and ChatGPT have campus agreements for data privacy.

- Cost is a concern, these services can get very expensive, and difficult to control. Since many of these services are purchased via a p-card, one recommendation was to have card holders keep a spreadsheet to track charges and share with the faculty who requested the purchase.
- EngrIT has discussed if it would be beneficial to conduct workshops by various disciplines, HR, finance, research…
- We are lagging behind in AI implementation, over the next year, an adoption strategy should be discussed.
  - Windows 11 implementation
    - After October 2025, no updates for older computers, they are missing a certain chip, so they won't work
    - About 1,300 machines across the college can't be upgraded, unless we upgrade hardware.
    - At some point machines won't be allowed to stay on the network because they can't get security patches. Some exceptions are allowed, but they have to be isolated on the network.
    - EngrIT has been setting aside all their desktop replacement machines that are compatible with Windows 11, but not nearly enough, only about 265 machines. The committee recommended that faculty and staff should be the priority for the allocation of these machines.
    - Information has been provided to units for review and allocation of some surplus machines. However, units found the information on machines needing to be upgraded only partially helpful. Some Machines were later determined to be suitable for transition to Windows 11 or it was hard to determine the user of machines in several instances.

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 partnerships with campus will help to ensure that the needs of GCOE are considered in critical infrastructure.

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