

Grainger College of Engineering, Engineering IT Governance
Admin Working Group Report for Academic Year 2025/2026

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Committee Members:

Tessa Hile, Grainger Engineering Administration, Chair

Karen Cromwell, Coordinated Science Lab

Emad Jassim, Grainger Engineering Undergraduate Programs Office

Rebecca Seymour, Mechanical Science & Engineering

Kris Williams, Materials Research Lab

Lori Willoughby, Grainger Engineering Administration

This preliminary report summarizes the conversations that took place during the monthly meetings of the admin working group, directed by the charge letter from Executive Associate Dean Philippe Geubelle, dated September 25, 2025. Topics of conversation focused on application development and oversight, Engineering IT service levels across the college, strategy alignment with campus technology services, improvements to the IT funding model, implementation/utilization of AI initiatives at the administration level, and recommendations for IT support for Chicago-based operations (DPI, IQMP, etc.).

One of the main efforts of the admin working group over the last several years has been involvement in and oversight of application development since it touches our daily work lives. One key change over the last year was the establishment of the “Project Management Office (PMO)” in July 2025. Previous IT leadership decided that it would be advantageous to have all the business analysts in one office to allow for cross-training etc. The group reminded leadership that the admin governance board is always willing to assist with setting goals and priorities, reviewing new projects, and approving additional resources if deemed necessary. It was noted that the existence of a dedicated HR resource has helped the PMO tremendously. The PMO team would like a similar resource to assist with Finance applications. This has been a goal for several years but has not materialized due to the research portfolio growth and the implementation of other college level initiatives. The chair of the admin working group will discuss this further with college leadership.

A new executive director, Laura Herriott, was hired in January 2026. Our first meeting with Laura was used as an introduction to our group. We also focused on providing suggestions on areas that needed improvement from our perspective. The group unanimously agreed that the key areas to review in the first few months of her tenure should be AV support (major conference room setup issues during high priority and high exposure events have been noted) and basic

user and desktop support services. We pointed out that new initiatives have been launched recently (i.e. facilitation services) that could gain momentum. While several groups in the college feel that the new initiatives have value, the group recommended focusing on core service activities, getting back to fundamentals, setting metrics to evaluate customer service levels in key areas and utilizing this group's expertise if other new initiatives are planned to launch.

We are very excited to be working with Laura in her new role. Laura's established relationships with other interdisciplinary research units, campus departments and campus technology services will further solidify the connection and engagement with campus-level IT services. She is a key member of the "Boldly IT" campus committee (with their main goals being consolidation and centralization of services across campus). Laura is very aware of the unique needs of a large academic and research college such as Grainger Engineering and can represent us well. There is concern that our unique needs will not be considered as IT services are consolidated but she will bring a strong voice to the committee. College leadership involvement will be key as it gets closer to decisions being made at the campus level.

The Engineering IT budget model is always a critical component of the admin working group's agenda, but the data presented has not always been clear or concise. During this academic year, changes were made to the budget model, specifically activity codes were eliminated, and unique program codes were created, with the goal of enhanced reporting for this committee's review and allowing IT leadership to assess each costed service more efficiently and effectively. We look forward to examining this data more closely during the next academic year and providing recommendations on key services such as the desktop and laptop replacement programs.

While the implementation of AI education for administration across the college started off quite slowly, Engineering IT did achieve a level of momentum over the course of the year once staff members/resources were identified and dedicated to the effort. We discussed the need for staff training, outreach and engagement (which should include providing an understanding of AI tools that are available and targeted training by functional area). We also felt that it was important to avoid a duplication of effort, recognizing that campus, IHR and SPA have implemented training programs and various AI tools specific to their audience's needs. The committee feels that it is critical that a foundation be provided before training is built for specific functional roles. We also recognize that each department is independently building upon the general training provided at the Spring leadership retreat. As we further this initiative, it will be important to leverage existing "expert" resources within our college (subject area experts and faculty AI experts) as training is further developed and offered more broadly.

Support for Chicago-based initiatives is a top concern and priority for Engineering IT leadership. Initial evaluation deemed the current level of user support in Chicago to be lacking and that there are several risks present in the existing infrastructure. The committee strongly recommends that college leadership finalize discussions with the system and campus regarding the support needed for Chicago initiatives to grow and thrive. The college continues to be at risk as these decisions are delayed. If it is decided that Engineering IT will provide support,

leadership will need to act quickly and make decisions regarding the critical positions needed in Chicago.

While we feel that key advancements were made during the current academic year, the committee recommends focusing on the following initiatives during the 2026-2027 academic year –

- Further development of the funding model, which includes evaluating certain services offered to departments, identifying areas for improvement or recommending elimination, reviewing the college level subsidy in more detail, and recommending budget reductions dependent on the outcome of the FY27 budget discussions
- Transitioning the IT budget model into an application to avoid user and spreadsheet errors
- Continued focus on enhanced AI training to admin staff
- Further discussion of “Boldly IT” decisions and the resulting effect on our college

We are open to further suggestions from Grainger Engineering leadership.

Respectfully Submitted,

The Engineering IT Admin Working Group