IT Governance Review

Background

The current UCLA IT Governance structure has been in place for over three years. During this period the participants in this process have gained practical experience from applying this initial version of the IT Governance in a rigorous manner to a variety of IT efforts. To date the initiatives and projects going through the IT Governance process have been mostly productivity systems involving a request for University funds.

In general, the value of the governance process has been recognized and it has been very effective in engaging campus leadership in more active and direct sponsorship of key IT projects. However over time the governance process has been asked to deal with increasingly more sophisticated institutional questions regarding IT and the expectations for the process have therefore increased. At times the current process has been slow and onerous and has not always met these rising expectations.

To address the need for review and revision, Jim Davis, Associate Vice Chancellor Information Technology, assembled a various workgroups to review the UCLA IT Governance structure in the light of past experience to make specific recommendations to improve its effectiveness.

Objectives

The objectives of the workgroups were to:

1. Build common understanding and agreement on the purpose and intent of IT Governance:
   - Set the right tone on IT Governance
   - Improve mutual understanding
   - Identify current barriers to governance (structural, operational, behavioral)
   - Provide better clarity on the parameters we apply for a project that needs to go through the process
   - Extend ownership of the IT Governance process beyond the OIT (Jim Davis)

2. Critically examine the existing UCLA IT Governance structure:
   - Examine what is working and what is not working
   - Develop recommendations to improve existing IT Governance mechanisms (committee structure, processes, meeting frequency, etc.)
   - Review existing governance committees and clarify their charges
• Develop specific recommendations on a reconstructed CITI committee and gain sufficient agreement to move forward on these changes
• Reconfirm the role of the Office Finance and Budget
• Confirm how IT Directors, and CAO’s should integrate into the process

Current State Analysis

What is working and not working?
The group began with an examination of what was working well and what was not working well in the current IT Governance structure:

Working Well:
• The current IT Governance structure is enabling good sponsorship and funding decisions by campus leadership.
• Campus leadership is more comfortable with projects because of the project documentation created through the process.
• EVC/Provost Neuman feels that the process is adding additional value by enabling staff to work out issues at a lower level in the organization.
• Some detractors of the governance process have become proponents of the outcomes once they have used the process and see the value it brings in gaining better sponsorship, insight and understanding of their projects.
• The process creates clear project definitions that have been properly been vetted.
• Clearer definition and documentation of projects (Project Control Documents), bringing everyone to a common understanding of initiatives.
• Provides a good opportunity to vet proposed project implementation models and designs.
• The process provides institutional memory to record that the appropriate project discussions have taken place on major IT initiatives.
• The process allows institutional initiatives to be formally represented, discussed, and approved at an institution level.
• The process has captured consensus and broadened the sponsorship of key campus initiatives.
• The process provides the necessary cover for individual units working on behalf of a cohesive campus plan.
Not Working:

- Need to take a fresh look at CSG and its integration with the CAO's
- Lack of clarity of roles of Governance groups e.g. CSG, CITI
- Need to review the composition, structure of CITI committee
- Need to improve CITI committee participation by senior leaders
- Need to examine role of CCC and Divisional CIO's
- Try to brief committee members before the meetings (offline) ... so we get decisions not education in the meetings.
- Need more structure on how the process and meetings should be driven. Meetings can be easily "bogged down", too much time is spent educating committees rather that getting decisions from them.
- It is a problem keeping some committees on course.
- Governance mechanisms need to be refined for making more operational decisions not just conceptual or strategic decisions.
- The process is unnecessarily cumbersome - too many meetings.
- The process takes too long and "is tuned to avoid all grief."
- The expectations for the governance process have increased.
- We are asking more sophisticated institutional questions.
- Fears exist on the implications for control over one's budget and one's unit.
- There are significant gaps in peoples’ understanding the process.
- The technology decisions we are working to resolve are more complex than in the past.
- All feel IT Governance is valued but there is an awful lot of consensus building.
- Disagreement exists on how we can be expeditious.