

ACADEMIC TECHNOLOGY CENTER

Status Report

October 9, 2001

PURPOSE

The Academic Technology Center partnership is bringing together the skills and resources of Information Technology and Library Affairs to create a cohesive, highly focused team capable of providing “one-stop shopping” to faculty seeking support for instructional technology initiatives. Although the Library and Information Technology are dedicated to providing the best possible services with the resources available to us, it was clear from the start that a comprehensive academic computing facility for a campus of this size would require additional investments in staff, training, and resources by the University administration.

MISSION

The mission of this partnership is to provide faculty with effective support for teaching and learning initiatives in the classroom and in distance learning technology. This mission can be further divided into three goals:

- (1) to develop a seamless and equal partnership between IT and Library Affairs, so that customers are unaware of the organizational complexities;
- (2) to set the trend for instructional technology for SIUC; and
- (3) to improve high-quality instructional technology development and support for campus faculty.

NEW INITIATIVES

The first steps in the Academic Technology Center partnership began when the Customer Service Center staff moved their offices from Lentz Hall to the first floor of the Library. This move happened in the fall of 2000 and enabled the two groups to begin collaborating. Staff in each area spent time getting to know the others' operations and looking for ways to work together to enhance existing services and to provide new services.

In the first few months of working together, the Academic Technology Center developed a website that highlights the partnership and provides information about the services and resources offered through the partnership. As the ATC develops over time, the website will be enhanced to illustrate new projects, services, and resources.

During the first six months of the partnership, the ATC began a seminar series on Microsoft Office products. Every month, the ATC offers seminars in Word, Excel, and Access. Each seminar is team-taught by one person from IT and one from Library Affairs. These seminars have been so well received that intermediate seminars have been developed and delivered for all three products. The creators of the seminars are currently training additional staff from our areas to also deliver the seminars. Registration for the seminars is handled online through the ATC website. As we move further into the Fall Semester, we expect the popularity for this service to increase greatly.

This summer, the partners agreed to contribute student assistant resources to jointly staff the reception area in the Academic Technology Center. The ATC hired student receptionists for the Fall Semester and they began working in late August. Each student will

be cross-trained in the operations of the Customer Service Center, Systems, and Instructional Support Services. This will further our mission to provide one-stop shopping for faculty, staff, and students at the University. By assigning well-trained student assistants to the “front line,” we were able to free up a Customer Service Center staff member’s time to devote to other opportunities in the ATC.

One staff member from Information Technology has been reassigned to work full-time with the Instructional Support Services staff to assist faculty with instructional design and web development for courses. This staff member also serves as a liaison to the Customer Service Center to identify possible collaborative opportunities for the two departments. This work began in August and is a significant contribution to faculty support on our campus.

ONGOING ACTIVITIES

In addition to these partnership accomplishments, staff in Information Technology and Library Affairs has continued to provide the same or greater level of service to our clients. Below are summaries of current activities that we continue to perform.

Library Affairs

- Instructional Design, web development, custom programming, and access to course development tools by faculty in over 300 courses
- Test scoring and statistical analysis through the mainframe, web, and e-mail
- Checkout of laptops, projectors, and digital cameras for classroom use
- Technical support for faculty teaching in Lawson Hall and the Morris Library Auditorium
- Seminar Series of technology-oriented short courses on HTML, PowerPoint, online searching, etc.
- Online subscriptions for thousands of electronic journals, indexes, and books

Information Technology

- Single entry point for customer problems, questions, and requests
- “Tier-1” technical support, including software tools and access to information in the SIUC computer network and the Internet
- Communication tools through e-mail, newsgroups, and the web
- Desktop productivity software
- Campus wide antivirus administration
- Job processing on the mainframe
- Technical support for users of the AIS system
- Management and tracking of customer problems, questions, and requests
- Administration of problem management system and knowledge base
- Paper and electronic documentation and publications

- Webmaster for IT web site
- Production and distribution of SalukiWare CD

FUTURE INITIATIVES

Following are some potential new initiatives for the partnership. Some can be provided without additional staff resources, and some would require increases in staff levels, training, and equipment.

- **Campus Needs Assessment**—It is important that we stay in sync with the needs of the campus as well as the “best practices” of academic technology across the nation. We need to develop an ongoing program to assess the needs of faculty and academic programs and how technology can be brought to bear on the problems, opportunities, and initiatives that arise. The form of the assessment may be surveys, focus groups, contacts with key individuals, and brown bag discussions or a combination thereof.
- **Brown Bag Discussions**—Hosted by the ATC, various interest groups could be invited to discuss their needs and provide information and instruction on academic technology issues. One of the first brown bag discussions proposed is a “how to” workshop on virus protection for LAN administrators and local support providers.
- **Additional workshops**—The campus community has greeted the ATC workshops with enthusiasm and appreciation. Many workshop participants have expressed an interest in advanced workshops in Office products such as Word, Access, Excel, etc.
- **Workshop Outreach Program**—We have already presented a few workshops to student groups, campus departments, and classes. As the campus becomes more aware of our offerings, we expect to receive more requests for special workshops and presentations.
- **Self-Instruction Courses**—Workshops that have already been developed could be reworked into self-instruction courses developed in WebCT or other such authoring tools.
- **Awards Program**—In order to encourage the use of technology in instruction, we could begin a recognition program showcasing the innovative use of technology in instruction by faculty members.
- **Gallery of Courses**—We could develop a gallery of courses that would be contributed to by innovative faculty members to inspire others to create courses that would follow those models.
- **Toolkits**—The ATC could develop templates, development aids, and other software tools and documentation that would speed the development of online courses and the use of technology in the learning process.
- **Integration of WebCT**—Pinnacle Corporation is developing an interface between WebCT and the Student Information System. If we were to develop a partnership with Pinnacle, we could influence the design and become an early adopter of the

integration product. This would permit the exchange of information between SIS and WebCT courses.

- **Other Partnerships**—The ATC could explore other campus partnerships that would provide a focused approach to academic technology on campus.

NEW REQUIREMENTS

Some of the new undertakings listed above will require little or no cost. In fact, the ATC partnership has already taken on several initiatives, while at the same time maintaining our current service level commitments. It would be an understatement to say that the ATC is now running at full capacity. However, many of the new initiatives listed above will require an infusion of staff time. In order to create the needed staff time, two options are available: 1) hire and train additional staffers, or 2) reduce current service levels to free-up staff time.

Option 1. Hire and train additional staff—the preferred method to accomplish this is to utilize new staffers to backfill current employees. The current employees could then be reassigned to other, higher-skilled activities. This is probably the least expensive hiring method, and it would boost the morale of our current staff. We would need to provide additional training to our current staff who have shown potential in these new technologies. Much of the training could be in-house, but again would require staff time on the part of our current staff.

Option 2. Reduce current service levels—We could discontinue certain services in favor of the new offerings; discontinue support of certain products and services; reduce operating hours; or other timesaving measures. While this would free up staff time, it might also have a negative impact on the image of the ATC.

CONCLUSION

The Academic Technology Center has made a good start, but we need additional staff time in order to pursue new goals. New undertakings are being unveiled on a regular basis—some require funding and some do not. However, reaching new goals will require significant staff time, and an infusion of new staff will require additional training.