CAMPUS TECHNOLOGY 2007

"A Documentary: The Classroom Upgrade Process at MSU"

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CONCEPTION:
Back in the mid-nineties the Assistant to the President, who was a respected administrator known for his future vision, realized that the University should be planning and investing for improvements to the classrooms and other instructional facilities. He managed to set aside funding and earmarked it to address the technology and infrastructure needs involved in updating these learning environments. A consultant was hired to review the facilities and resources, confirm the needs, and establish a direction for change. With the Academic Vice President, my position was created to assume the responsibilities involved in developing and overseeing an annual process, as well as addressing the overall instructional technology needs of the University.

DEVELOPMENT:
The Director of the (now titled) Educational Technology Center (ETC), arrived on campus and reported to the Dean of Library Services to help complete the major expansion/ remodeling library project and facilitate the planning and installations of instructional technology into the revised facility. Along with managing various service points and computer-based labs, this position was responsible for the planning, coordinating, and facilitating the design of classroom technologies, media systems and facility technology components. Responsibilities also included developing and implementing classroom/ technology standards, training materials/programs, and budget planning/management.

A year and a half later it was decided that I should be restructured directly under the Academic V.P.'s office and report to the Academic Associate Vice President. After another year, with a new incoming president, the University adopted the Provost model and the ETC began reporting to the newly appointed Acting Provost, and then Associate Provost, with one more restructuring step to occur that combines the ETC into the Extended University academic unit. The point of recalling this history is to consider the scenario of addressing technology needs, advances, and solutions along with major organizational changes, and at the same time devising an annual collaborative process involving all the academic departments and various administrative units.

Funding:
Although the Assistant to the President had set aside approximately $859,364.00 to be allocated for these upgrades, this funding was diverted during the first 2 years to cover cost overruns from the Library renovation project. In response to this adjustment, the Chief Information Officer allocated $100,000.00 out of his special projects budget to be used to start our process, only to have it diverted to cover shortages caused by State funding cutbacks. He later managed to scrape up $30,000.00 that we could use to begin our first year process. Since the classroom upgrade budget would continue to be diverted to cover the Library project for the next 1-2 years, it was decided to approach the Student Government Association to consider allocating some of the student technology fee money to be used for the technology involved in the classrooms. This requested yielded $220,000.00 of annual funding designated for the technology in classrooms that would directly impact student learning.

New Positions:
Before getting underway, I proposed 3 new positions that would be essential for supporting the work involved. One was for a Classroom Coordinator, who would work with me to oversee the process; coordinate each step in our procedures; formulate and initiate new procedures required for planning, implementation, and support; and assist in technology orders and budget tracking. The other position was for another Media Systems Technician. We currently had only one Media Systems Technician serving the entire campus, which was inadequate for the current demands, not to mention addressing the increased workflow with the new initiatives. These two positions were approved and salaries were deducted form the Classroom Upgrade budget. The third position proposed was for another electrician. It was decided to wait on this proposal until a budget impact review could be done across a couple years before approving this position. At this time I can announce that it was decided this year to not only to approve the electrician position but another carpenter position was included.

Collaborations:
Working with the Chief Information Officer, Academic Vice President, Academic Associate Vice President, Assistant to the President, and others we developed an approach to establish an annual process for upgrading classrooms. The Instructional Technology Advisory Committee, or ITAC, was re-enacted to represent each academic College. In the first year, the Classroom Committee (Informal Ad hoc group with OIT) would review and prioritize the final list. In the following years this group would be revised to become the Classroom Upgrade Oversight Committee, CUOC, which consisted of the Academic V.P. and Associate V.P., the Administrative V.P. and Associate V.P., and the ETC Director. CUOC was revised once again after Academic Affairs adopted the Provost model with the arrival of a new University President and three Associate Provosts would join this committee. Other areas that were involved and worked together included the Educational Technology Center, Facilities Management, Telecommunication Services, Design & Construction, and Room Scheduling. Collaborations also occurred across the Colleges involving various department heads, faculty, distributed support specialist, instructional technology specialist, other support personnel of the College, and Deans.

IMPLEMENTATION:
During the first year, each ITAC member, appointed by the Dean, would solicit requests from all the departments within their College and work with their Dean to prioritize the list. Due to the limited funding, all the upgrade work during the first two years was limited to technology, with infrastructure only related to the technology being included. Professionals from the ETC would review each request and provide recommendations and costs estimates for equipment. Infrastructure work related to the technology would receive cost estimates from Facilities Management, Design & Construction, and/or Telecommunication Services. ITAC would review all the lists and establish the allocation recommendations for approval by the Classroom Committee (Informal Ad hoc group with OIT). Once the list was finalized equipment was ordered, work orders submitted, and the installation work was done across the rest of the year.

During the second year more funding became available, the $220,000.00 Classroom SCUF budget, with the allocations from the student technology fee. A process similar to the first year was followed but was more involved with the additional funding. ITAC worked with the Deans to develop and prioritize their lists. Cost estimates were developed and added to each proposal. The Classroom Upgrade Oversight Committee, CUOC was formed, who reviewed the list of proposals and determined decisions for approval. The time-line for most of the installation work was directed to occur across the summer when classrooms could be more available.

By the third year, with all cost over runs from the library project being met, the $859,364.00 Classroom Upgrade Budget became available which allowed the full range of infrastructure needs to be included into the process. Recall that the salaries and benefits from the 2 positions acquired were deducted from this budget. We operated with about $750,000.00 from the Classroom Upgrade Budget and $220,000.00 from the Classroom SCUF Budget. It was decided to set aside funding from the Classroom SCUF Budget to allocate $40,000.00 for repairs, maintenance, and replacement, and to deduct life-cycle replacements costs for technology upgrades on a 4 year cycle before any new installation allocations were assigned.

<u>The Classroom Upgrade Process document:</u>
Also by the third year, we had formulated our process and the Classroom Upgrade Process document was developed. This document defined each step of the process, assigned deadlines across the calendar for each task, specified terminology and standards involved, and identified the various committee members and team players. It also broke up the process into three distinctive steps that include the Planning phase, Installation work, and Support elements.

<u>Planning Phase:</u>
The phase is the overlap in the process and was done to allow ample planning time during the spring semester and summer. The deadline is soon after the beginning of the fall semester. An announcement for proposals and form is sent out from the Provost's office late spring. The Classroom Coordinator meets with each faculty who is

developing a proposal at the location to review and discuss the details. The Dean prioritizes all the proposals compiled from their College and submits them by the end of August. During September the Classroom Coordinator, ETC Director, and Associate Vice President for Administrative Services review the proposals and develop a comprehensive priority list. In this phase proposals from Facilities Management for infrastructure considerations and the ETC for additional technology considerations are included. The “Lessons Learned” meeting is held where the participants of the process review the past year and discuss considerations for what worked well and where we need to improve. During October, cost estimates are developed and submitted to the Classroom Upgrade Oversight Committee who determines the project list for the coming year. Project Request Forms are submitted to Design & Construction for the projects they’ll be involved in. Site tours are arranged with all the areas involved with the installation work to review details of the scope and cost for the work involved. The Classroom Coordinator informs Room Scheduling about the proposed rooms that may be taken off the schedule. From December through February things are reviewed, consultants are assigned as required, the information is finalized, and materials are prepared for outside contracting bids and/or internal work orders. The Classroom Coordinator confirms the room list with Room Scheduling to be taken off the reservation schedule as needed. During March the Classroom Coordinator submits equipment, media systems, and presentation technology list for final approval, finalizes in-house installation plans, and submits all work orders and purchase orders involved. Design & Construction solicits bids and prepares materials for the Board of Governors meeting. During April the Board of Governors reviews and approves the funding. Also in April, the announcement for planning for the coming year is sent out form the Provosts office.

Installation Work:

At the end of the spring semester somewhere near around the third week of May, work begins. Some in-house projects may begin sooner as possible. The deadline for completion of all work in this cycle is early August so the Classroom Coordinator may provide training to all faculty as requested. Orientation sessions are provided as well as some one-on-one sessions. Support materials are posted at the instructor stations and on the ETC web site. The ETC is in the process of developing video training sessions and plans to soon make available.

Support Elements:

There are a lot of support issues that are still being addressed. Currently the ETC provides the contact point for troubleshooting, repair, and replacement. A maintenance schedule has been created and provided by the ETC for all the media equipment and presentation systems. A computer support plan is in process, along with a comprehensive troubleshooting response and support plan. Security issues are under review. An annual inquiry for technology standardization has been practiced but future planning still needs to be more formalized. A centralized room scheduling formula has been disused but still needs to be addressed. Equipment recommendations, photos and descriptions, operating instructions, and documentation is posted on the ETC web site. The Classroom Upgrade Proposal from is also posted, along with the description of the three technology levels used with equipment items involved for each level.

LESSONS LEARNED/SUMMARY:
A formal review is included in the Classroom Upgrade Process document. It specifies that a meeting will occur each year between the participants responsible for this process. We will review and discuss the past year with the intention of identifying considerations for improving our procedures and/or methods. The meeting notes are recorded and distributed for future reference. This intention establishes a goal for critical thinking and accountability to become an inherent part of the process. Across a brief history there are notable lessons to report, but I have decided to reserve this section for part two of this story, or the sequel to “A Documentary: The Classroom Upgrade Process at MSU Part II”.

I will be available and intend to address any inquiries about our experiences at MSU during the conference presentation, including reference to some of the lessons learned. There are many details and experiences about this process that could not be addressed in an article, lending itself to grow more into a book. Copies of the various documents followed and forms used in this process will be available at the presentation along with some images of the classroom settings, presentation systems, and media components.