

NYU IT Task Force Operating Principles

***Working document drafted on April 30, 2008;
revised as of June 2, August 20, October 2, 2008, April 14, 2009***

1. Aspirational/Lasting

We want to create a lasting mechanism for how to review priorities as the context changes so we are able to focus our resources effectively. There is always a tension between resource constraints and aspirational plans. This tension is manifested in our charge, which is to think aspirationally and globally about how technology could distinguish us as an institution, while remaining prudent about how we expend resources. We should be developing a set of criteria and principles to guide IT governance and decision making into the future to help decide what initiatives get paid for and in what manner.

2. Benchmarking with other institutions

As a starting point, for each issue we consider, we need to be looking at what our peer schools are already doing or are looking to do. For each topic we consider, we will do internal benchmarking of the three to four schools that are leading in that particular area. Taking research as an example, we could be looking at what IT services and infrastructure we need to invest in to continue to be a major research university. We should also look at how top-ranked universities are supporting research, and how technology serves those goals. This task force should help set priorities that will direct the marginal discretionary funds remaining after core operations, and create a way to follow up so that decisions made now will guide the university on future decisions.

3. Engaging the community for feedback and communication

We agreed on the importance of engaging the community of users in this process. In addition to using the network of CIOs from the various schools, we will integrate surveys and open houses with students, faculty and administrators into the schedule to make sure that input from the various users is incorporated into our planning. The Task Force is a bridge to connect ITS with the leadership and the broader community. Faculty and students are increasingly arriving with ever greater technological savvy and independence, and we need to familiarize ourselves with the next generation of users and how technology is being used to establish communities for work, research, play and social networking in new ways.

4. Recognizing the importance of achieving an appropriate balance between central, school, and unit-based services.

At NYU, the scope of IT resources available and the expected levels of IT service vary from school to school, unit to unit. In developing guidance on how schools and units decide when to provide decentralized IT services and when to rely on central services, the Task Force should encourage consideration of several factors, including innovation, cost, service, and management control. The guidelines should be designed to:

- Promote innovation – on the edges and in the center - in uses and sources of IT services;
- Support the schools' unique competitive, discipline-specific and reputational needs;
- Encourage continuous improvement in the quality, efficiency, and accessibility of central IT services;
- Facilitate engagement by members of the NYU community across units and in interdisciplinary work, through integrated IT services wherever appropriate;
- Present easy, appealing access for the world to current information about NYU; and
- Leverage economies of scale wherever practicable, as technologies and services evolve.

We should suggest ways that the central IT and member schools can work together to avoid duplicate systems that often exist in decentralized silo-type organizations and what services could be delivered more effectively through outsourcing. The Task Force should be thinking of both how technology can make us more efficient overall as an institution and how IT services can be made more efficient.

5. Planning with an understanding of, but not over-reliance on, Abu Dhabi

While recognizing that the campus at Abu Dhabi (AD) affords us an opportunity to do something unique, we also need to be mindful of the broader goals of the university and make sure that the investments in AD are integrated into the planning that happens in New York. While IT is crucial to the campus vision in AD, the global infrastructure we invest in should support the broader NYU mission. As we build a high performance computing network off-site in Abu Dhabi, we should be looking at the needs of our other campuses around the globe, and decide what services to pursue, how to structure those services, and how to allocate resources across the broader university. We will also look at ways to cast the library as an incubator for creating a digital experimentation center that will serve as an informational hub for a more flexible campus. Our global aspirations include collaborative teaching and inter-connectedness among classrooms, which will be achieved through various streaming activities and digital project spaces that take advantage of technology without calling attention to it.