AT FCoP Executive Summary 2015-2016

A note from the co-leads of the Academic Technology FCoP

To: Provost Karen Hanson and Interim VP CIO Bernard Gulachek

We believe that the conclusion of this Formal Community of Practice represents a significant effort as well as a significant opportunity for the University of Minnesota. This work was launched through an unprecedented act of cooperation between the Provost's office and the Office of Information Technology. It continued with broad participation of staff from from central, campus, and system IT as well as faculty throughout the UMN system and took into consideration the experience of our peer institutions across the country, as well as the best research into how to support teaching with technology.

As you read this executive summary, know that we are ready to assist you in the implementation of the recommendations you choose to carry forward. We are grateful for the opportunity to have been a part of this initiative and have high hopes that the work that will now begin will be transformative as we *"...prepare students to meet the great challenges facing our state, our nation, and our world."*[1]

Sincerely,
Donalee Attardo, Associate CIO, Twin Cities
Kate Martin, Assistant Director, CEI, Twin Cities
Bruce Reeves, Manager of Academic Support, ITSS, Duluth

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[1] https://twin-cities.umn.edu/about-us

Purpose

The Academic Technology Formal Community of Practice (AT FCoP) was charged with developing and implementing a collaborative process that engages faculty, students, academic units, and instructional and IT staff in managing the selection, piloting, and assessment of emerging technologies and in providing support for existing technologies to advance the University's teaching and learning mission.

Summary

At the kick-off meeting and other scheduled input sessions with faculty during the fall of 2015, over 200 members of the UMN academic technology community provided input to outline three areas of focus for our work:

1. To ensure that the University community is able to easily find and effectively use Academic Technology resources,
2. To research the barriers to faculty adoption of academic technologies, and make recommendations based on findings that address these issues, and
3. To create a sustainable and transparent process that involves the UMN community for making good decisions about the implementation and use of academic technology.

Affinity groups of 30-50 faculty and staff were formed to work around these areas. Over the last seven months, the affinity groups worked together to create a set of recommendations for how to improve Academic Technology support and how to increase exemplary use. They also developed a recommended process for how to make good decisions about the implementation and use of academic technology. Their recommendations were generated through their collective efforts to research and to collect information through surveys and interviews across a broad population with more than 570 University faculty, 278 staff members, 182 students, and colleagues from 20 peer institutions.

Recommendations

1. To ensure that the University community is able to easily find and effectively use Academic Technology resources, the AT FCoP recommends the following:
   - Coordinate support processes across the institution by ensuring a central contact point (e.g., central contact point for each campus) can triage the issue, solve the issue if possible, or make a warm transfer to other units, individuals, or resources as needed. This would require collaboration and agreement between colleges, system campuses, and units providing AT support on campus to agree with and support this solution.

   - Create and execute a multi-pronged communication plan that clearly identifies:
     - Types of support and services available to the University community and how to make them more discoverable.
     - Appropriate methods for communicating resources to users that are relevant to each campus.

○ Opportunities to facilitate information sharing among faculty using their preferred mode of learning about academic technology.

○ Potential showcase or event opportunities that are aligned with critical points in the academic calendar that can help help encourage excitement amongst technology users.

Additional details on these recommendations can be found in the Continuum of Support Final Report.

2. To research the barriers to faculty adoption of academic technologies, and make recommendations based on findings that address these issues.

Using faculty input, the AT FCoP first identified the barriers that impact faculty and recommends the following:

● Expect and reward learner-centered teaching practices, and effective and creative use of academic technologies.

● Integrate the recognition and scholarship of teaching with technology into the annual review as well as the Promotion and Tenure processes.

● Develop a University-wide initiative that provides incentives and recognizes faculty for exemplary and innovative use of academic technology in support of active learning. The program could consist of honorary awards (e.g., Academy of Distinguished Teachers) or monetary awards for the use of professional development or reduced teaching loads, etc.

To read more about the conditions that help support exemplary use of technology, see the Exemplary Use Final Report.

3. To create a sustainable and transparent process that involves the UMN community for making good decisions about the implementation and use of academic technology, the AT FCoP recommends:

● that a two tiered, academic technology decision-making model be created. Together, processes in these models would address large scale evaluations and recommendations and would also provide for and promote small scale innovations. These decision making processes are:
  ○ A committee ("ULTA") to evaluate and make recommendations on academic technology life-cycle decisions serving the entire UMN system. This committee would be primarily composed of faculty from each college and campus along with non-faculty representatives from academic and IT units.
  ○ A small grants Program ("ATIRA") that would fund small scale academic technology implementations. The purpose of this program would be to promote

innovation at the UMN unit level. Successful technology implementations at this level may be proposed to ULTA to consider for wider implementation

For further details on the decision making processes, including a process flow, see the Decision Making Process Final Report.

Background

The following sections highlight key background information on the AT FCoP, its charge, success criteria, methods used, and acknowledgement of key participants in this work.

Success Criteria

The success criteria for the FCoP were:

- A sustainable and transparent process, using input from the UMN community, will be developed for making good decisions about the implementation and use of academic technology.
- The University community will be able to easily find and effectively use Academic Technology resources.
- Recommendations will be made based on research that addresses issues impacting faculty use of academic technologies.

In Scope

- Development of a central resource for academic technology resources and services at UMN.
- Creation of a structure to assist with decision-making to select new academic technologies for UMN.
- Recommendations to go to Provost Karen Hanson and VPCIO Bernard Gulachek.
- Communication strategies and communications regarding any work taking place under the FCoP charge.

Out of Scope

- Non-academic technologies

Affinity Groups

- Continuum of Support: To ensure that the University community is able to easily find and effectively use Academic Technology resources.
- Improving Exemplary Use: To research the issues impacting faculty use of academic technologies, and make recommendations based on findings that address these issues.
- Decision-making Process and Framework: To create a sustainable and transparent process that involves the UMN community for making good decisions about the implementation and use of academic technology.

Data Gathering

As part of the data gathering process, the AT FCoP Affinity Groups received responses from over 1,000 faculty, staff, and students across the UMN system. In addition, interviews were conducted with peer institutions as well as UMN units. Faculty listening sessions as well as presentations to SCIT and ADT gathered additional qualitative feedback. A review of the literature reinforced the findings of the surveys, interviews, and listening sessions.

Synthesis

These are the top results that emerged for each surveyed population

Faculty Survey

1. They go to their colleagues for assistance and guidance.
2. They want to feel empowered to use technology on their own.
3. Time and resources are barriers.

Student Survey: Indicators of a course that effectively integrates technology

1. Course web site is well-organized and things are easy to find.
2. Instructors are knowledgeable about technology used in the course.
3. Technology was meaningfully used in learning activities and assessments.

Support Staff Survey

1. Support staff will go to their peers for help, then to online resources (preferably in video or text formats) or the helpdesk.
2. Time required to learn about academic technology was the greatest barrier to usage.
3. Support staff most commonly go to IT Staff to learn about new Academic Technology at the University. They also found technology training and one-on-one interaction to be valuable resources.

Interviews With Peer Institutions and UMN System Units

Colleagues at peer institutions were queried for two purposes: one, to discover how academic technology support is perceived by their institutions' faculty and staff, and two, to gather ideas that have worked on their campuses for our recommendations. Among the institutions contacted, these commonalities in academic technology use and support were discovered:

1. Collaborative support structure with centralized information technology and academic units
2. Use of local academic technology support units
3. Formal faculty engagement programs, usually incentivized

4. Internal work groups that explore and share on topics related to academic technology for teaching and learning (for example, AT Tools iCoP).
5. Utilization of multiple avenues to triage and discover areas of need
6. Governance and decision-making for AT exists at each institution. Although processes vary from very formal, to informal, to customized by technology, in general academic leadership outside of IT participates in governance and faculty input is a consistent ingredient to decision-making.

Staff across the UMN system were interviewed to gather information on the various ways academic technology is currently supported at UMN. Three different models (with variations encompassing features of each) were found:

1. Highly Integrated Local Support: College (or unit/campus) has invested in academic technologists and resources for the support of Academic Technologies. Most requests are handled at the collegiate and/or departmental level.

2. Coordinated Support: College (or unit/campus) may have hired academic technologists who provide some level of support for day-to-day activities using academic technology tools. Other units may have no embedded or central academic technology staff. In both cases, these colleges augment their own support with resources from central support units.

3. Minimal Local Support: College (or unit/campus) uses a decentralized model and typically does not provide support at the unit level. Faculty may be self-supporting their academic technology usage or they may look to central support units for assistance.

Acknowledgements

Affinity Group Leads

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Affinity Group Working Groups

Online Event Support

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- IT Communications Team
- OIT A/V Events Team

AT FCoP Leadership

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