

Standard III - Resources

C. Technology Resources

Observations

Bakersfield College embraces technology to meet the needs of teaching, learning, college-wide communications, research, and operational systems. Technology on the Bakersfield College campus as well as at the Delano Center is abundant, and is supportive of teaching and learning. As we walked around both the Delano Center and the Panorama Campus, workstations for students were not just in use, but in demand; video streaming was employed to connect meeting participants in different physical locations; effective use of technology was witnessed in staff offices. Based on interviews with the Bakersfield College Information Systems Director and the Vice Chancellor of Operations from Kern Community College District, it is evident that while the College identifies and works to meet its own technology needs, it maintains a positive working relationship with District IT.

Findings and Evidence

Technology needs are identified through a variety of methods. The Annual Program Review process, completed by each organizational unit on campus, specifies the technology needs for that area leading the requester to fill out an ISIT Needs Form. Industry advisory groups communicate to specific programs what software and hardware they should use for effective instruction. Lists of the age of equipment are kept by IT personnel to plan for replacement in a systematic way. Criteria for deciding which type of hardware to purchase is outlined in the Media Services/Information Services Equipment Purchasing Policy & Procedure document from 2009. The 2011-2012 Information Services and Media Services Technology Plan shows that technology is interwoven with the goals of the college, as well as a list of technology projects undertaken, and projects for the future. Technology district wide may be instituted based on input from administrators from all colleges in response to external factors or environmental scans, but a process for decision making was not in evidence. (III.C.1.a)

Computer labs on campus are provided for students enrolled in both face-to-face courses and online. Online students often use the physical computer labs on campus to complete their coursework, and electronic reference materials, how-to videos, and help desk support are all offered to students regardless of their location or the time of day. Targeted support for online students through a pilot online tutoring program has been implemented, and encouraging more students to access online orientations as well as increasing online student services would be a positive addition to student learning. The institution utilizes Luminis portal which interfaces with the Moodle course management software, allowing ease of access with single log-in user authentication. This is available for all students through the Internet 24 hours a day, and seamlessly connects with student e-mail accounts hosted by Google. (III.C.1.a.)

Bakersfield College offers staff and faculty development workshops and training throughout the year. Technology skills and support are highlighted through activities such as “Geek Week” or online video training available on demand. Combined Recommendations from Distance Education Task Force acknowledges the need to evaluate all methods of education delivery for adequate student support and staffing, and to offer more professional development in the use of

instructional technology, particularly for distance education. This report made two major recommendations, the first is to create a new position of Faculty Director of Instructional Technology, and the second to create more targeted support for online students through an online orientation and an online student signal alert program, which would show students as they log on if they are in danger of failing a class. (III.C.1.a)

The IT committee tracks computers by age, with the stated goal of replacement every three to five years. According to the Self Study there are over 2,500 computers between the Delano Center and the Panorama Campus. The Lab Computer Age as Of 4-14-2011 document lists 40 percent of these machines and Faculty Staff Desktop and Laptops 2012-13 lists another 32 percent. The ISIT AV Equipment Plans 2012-13 tracking document shows IT's plan to systematically upgrade and support both hardware and software needs on campus. (III.C.1.d.)

A technology survey of faculty and staff in October, 2011, indicates that the majority is satisfied with the technology infrastructure, finding it up to date and well maintained. A follow up survey conducted in January, 2012 attempted to clearly identify technology needs not being met. Participants, asked to identify themselves, received a personal visit from an IT representative who assessed the nature of the issue and took steps to resolve it. (III.C.1.a, III.C.1.b, III.C.2)

From the Information Systems and Instructional Technology (ISIT) Goals for 2011-2012 the top two goals are also the new faculty position and the student signal alert program. In the ISIT Spring 12 Report, these two goals had not been realized. Budget constraints are cited as the limiting factor. (III.C.1.c)

Some technology is added without a formal process or plan. Challenges inherent in supporting technology that specific programs acquire through grant funding or from external entities, for example Allied Health. A new degree audit software program is planned district wide. This program will be available for all colleges and will enable counselors and students easy access to an inventory of courses which they have completed and courses still required to earn various degrees. The product itself may do a wonderful job of enhancing student success, but there was no evidence of a linkage between strategic planning, future planning, program reviews, or budgeting. (III.C.1.c)

Technology needs are analyzed by individual programs on campus, and the method for integrating planning for the institution and planning for technology resources is apparent. Each program completes an Annual Program Review, which includes a check box if the review includes a request for technology resources. Since it is not always possible to replace all computers as quickly as desired, the campus utilizes a "push down" practice when replacing computers. This allows recently replaced computers from labs to be placed on individual desktops. This practice is being reevaluated with the realization that in order to better meet institutional needs certain staff require more up to technology resources to complete their work than others. Until a new process is codified, the IT personnel are responding to needs as they are notified individually. Assess technology resources and usability across the campus in order to reduce underutilized or out of date equipment and allocate resources effectively. (III.C.1.c)

The College and district are cognizant of the value of the data collected through all programs and services, and have security measures in place, including incremental data backups on a daily basis, and a full backup weekly and monthly, as evidenced in the District Office Tape Backup Policy document. Three months of backup for all systems are stored at an off-site location. Hardware and software are available at centers, and across campus in a variety of labs, classrooms, the library, and offices. Currently the institution is grappling with the question of whether or not to provide remote access to content on the servers, or whether to provide virtual servers, while maintaining the security of the data. In interviewing the IT representatives it is evident they are well aware of the challenges inherent in distributing resources more broadly. Locally, Information Services and Media Services use online forms for maintenance requests and prioritize instructional needs above others for maintenance. (III.C.1.d)

Technology planning is integrated with College planning in many areas, but increasing this integration between all units on campus, and including the district would help facilitate the most effective use of technology resources. Locally, ISIT requests made with the ISIT Technology Request Form of 2011 and an Excel workbook form provide input as the committee assigns a priority based on established criteria. The request form contains links to the strategic plan and asks for the user to specify how the request aligns with the College goals and program student learning outcomes or administrative unit outcomes. Linking the technology request to college goals ensures that requested technology hardware or software applications supports college goals. Assessment of how well technology is assisting the college in achieving its goals is not apparent. (III.C.2)

Conclusions

Bakersfield College widely utilizes and supports technology for the benefit of all constituents. Planning in the Annual Program Review process informs some of the requisitions of new and updated technology. Faculty and staff training is done “in house” for the most part, or between colleges in Kern Community College District in order to minimize the expense. In some cases, the lack of funding is impacting the ability to offer support as quickly or in as comprehensive a manner as desired. Integration of planning for IT and institutional planning for either the College or the district does not seem to occur in a broad or systematic manner. Aside from the satisfaction survey, there is no evidence for regular assessment of College level technology and its appropriate deployment. The College partially meets the requirements of Standard III.C and needs to conduct an assessment of how well technology resources are achieving the anticipated results in order to fully comply with Standard III.C.

Recommendations:

Recommendation# 7 Develop an assessment methodology to evaluate how well technology resources support institutional goals.

In order to meet the Standards, the team recommends that the College develop and use an assessment methodology to evaluate how well technology resources support institutional goals and use the result of the evaluation as a basis for improvement. (III.C.2)