SWOT analysis of UM Central IT
The University of Montana Foundation Observations
September 2011

Overview:
Our experience with the UM Central IT department comes from several viewpoints: as on-campus consumers of your services, as a separate legal entity contracting for services from you, and as a fundraising partner for the University.

We have been generally impressed with the efforts, achievements, and professionalism of UM Central IT. The following list is a summary from our various viewpoints through recent projects.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer these observations, and welcome ongoing dialog about how we can both work to make our relationship as effective and productive as possible.

Thanks for all your team does, each day of the year!

Strengths:
• Extremely strong technical expertise on staff in key areas. Network Engineering and Security teams are highly responsive and very professional.
• Strong communication skills in several key frontline staff.
• Strong customer service ethic in many employees.
• Timely communication to campus of problems and expected resolution timelines with progress updates.
• Sense of humor and proportion in email communications.
• Always respond well (or at least acceptably) to clear, specific, point in time, requests for short-term services.
• Continually adopting, supporting, and hosting new technologies (MediaWiki, Cascade, Camtasia, Moodle).
• Offer web development services.
• Offer software training across numerous topics with a user-friendly sign-up system that you share.
• Organize/support TechPartners -- a great asset in coordinating information and efforts.
• Offer shared accounts for better savings and order management with major vendors (Dell, SunGard).

Weaknesses:
• Lack of a coordinated, articulated, documented long term strategy makes fundraising for large initiatives like a hosting facility, coordinated student labs, and campus-wide high speed wireless access more challenging.
• No published Service Level Agreements (SLA’s) to set and manage expectations or to measure success or failure.
• No published directory or organization chart to help external participants interact effectively with your teams.
• Inconsistent work tracking in different IT service units:
  o Weak timeline and/or resource management for some activities;
  o Lack of work request tracking and follow-up by some teams;
  o Lack of communication about timeline for requests, leading to customer frustration;
  o Inconsistent communications behavior – non-responses to queries, long delays, and non-answer responses without further followup;
• Some teams not very responsive to large requests or long-term issues. Often subject to long delays, slipped deadlines, or no response.
• Sometimes teams appear organized around skillsets rather than service delivery.
• Some team members do not view themselves as service delivery professionals, but rather as technical experts who don’t need to be responsive to customers.
• Some resistance to using capabilities of existing infrastructure to its fullest.
• No formal process for accepting suggestions from outside, reviewing, and responding.
• No formal internal coordination between teams.

Opportunities:
• New Campus Leadership offers a chance for IT Management to increase communication and establish needs and goals for capital projects and capital project fundraising.
• Desire of experts on staff to make quantum improvements (and the skills needed to do so).
• Desire of team members to integrate service delivery across teams.
• Interest in developing better coordination of projects between teams.
• Upgrades, coupled with increasing use of capabilities of existing products.
• Demand for expansion of training to more software and more levels.
• Opportunity to coordinate application training offerings with external units.
• Need for technical training in many small independent units.
• Need for technical consulting in many small independent units.
• Increasing awareness of security and operations threats to small independent units lacking security expertise.
• Increasing awareness of the cost of training and maintaining professional technical staff in small independent units.
• Interest in a purchasing co-op for best prices on commodity products like Windows software, Adobe software, desktops, monitors, printers, mice, and supplies.
• Interest in sharing knowledge among technical staff in all units offers a chance to bring strengths from all areas to solve short and long term technical challenges.
Threats:

- Increased hacking activity and general security threats.
- Increasing number of foreign devices on local network.
- Failure of stand-alone departmental IT teams to plan well for security and data management may increase risk and liability for the University.
- Turnover in small independent departments may create emergencies and increase surprise / emergency demands on central IT and increase costs unexpectedly.
- End of grant funding may leave large, separately hosted and/or managed databases or computing resources unmanaged, exposed, or subject to loss.
- Increasing demands for services and resources from departments with their own internal IT operations without fair cost-sharing or budget reallocation. (The services they demand may outstrip campus network capacity, management, and security resources.)
- Increasing demand for new technology by students (e.g. wireless access, high bandwidth application support, high volume data stores, photo and video production workstations) may outstrip budget and technology resources, or lead to more separate facilities.
- Frustration with central service processes and costs may lead additional departments to develop their own infrastructure and teams.