

# The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

## Northeast Iowa Community College

Project Details		
<b>Title</b>	Develop and implement a college-wide information technology master plan	<b>Status</b> COMPLETED
<b>Category</b>	6-Supporting Institutional Operations	<b>Updated</b> 09-14-2010
<b>Timeline</b>		<b>Reviewed</b> 10-02-2010
	<b>Planned Project Kickoff</b> 08-01-2009	<b>Created</b> 11-24-2009
	<b>Actual Completion</b> 08-01-2011	<b>Version</b> 1

### 1: Project Goal

**A:** This goal is to develop and implement a comprehensive information technology plan for the College. A technology consulting firm has been hired to assist in performing a technology audit, ascertain institutional and instructional needs, and develop a master plan. The project will include appropriate milestones to map the progress and document targets achieved during the process.

### 2: Reasons For Project

**A:** Information technology is a key resource in supporting a college's institutional and instructional operations. It is also an expensive investment both for operational and strategic purposes. Thus, a sound allocation of finite institutional resources for legacy and new technologies is a high priority. The College performed a technology audit in 2005. However, NICC has never developed a technology master plan to chart a course to meet current and future technology needs. Since the College invested in an enterprise information system a few years ago and implemented at least seven on-line academic programs the last two years, technology planning becomes very critical. Furthermore, the College wishes to be more proactive in budgeting for future technology needs.

### 3: Organizational Areas Affected

**A:** All employees and students will be impacted by the development and implementation of the information technology master plan. The key groups affected are:

- The Institutional and Instructional Subcommittee of the Quality Council: This committee is responsible for supporting the planning process and developing the assessment plan to document the goals achieved.
- The Computer Information Services department: This department will provide some key data needed to assist in performing a technology audit as part of the planning process. It will play a role in the formulation of the technology plan and its implementation.
- The faculty, staff, and students: They will assist the consultants in identifying the current and future institutional and instructional needs.
- The Distance Learning department: It will ensure that adequate consideration is given to maintaining a sound foundation for our on-line programs and training.
- The CAST Consortium: NICC is one of four community colleges in the consortium supporting Datatel, the enterprise information system.
- The Cabinet and Board of Trustees: They will receive regular updates on the project progress and will be consulted on key technology acquisitions.

### 4: Key Organizational Process(es)

**A:**

- Planning: It helps the College to plan for more efficient and cost-effective services for technology users.
- Data Collection and Analysis: It provides a formal method for the analysis and communication of future technology plans.
- Decision Making: It provides a basis for operational and strategic decision making because initial investment in any technology will affect future budgets due to ongoing maintenance.
- Shared Governance: It enables all key stakeholders to participate in reviewing, discussing, and synthesizing the college-wide technology needs.

### 5: Project Time Frame Rationale

**A:** Creating and implementing a technology master plan requires patience and time because of the strategic nature of the undertaking. It is important to prioritize when and how to bring different changes on-line because technological transitions create ripple effect throughout the organization. This action project will take at least two years to complete the following:

- The creation of the technology master plan:
  - o Phase I: Systems and infrastructure analysis
  - o Phase II: Business needs assessment
  - o Phase III: Information technology

organizational review o Phase IV: Technology assessment survey o Phase V: Wide-area network analysis o Phase VI: Voice-over-IP telephony integration verification analysis o Phase VII: Evaluation and design o Phase VIII: High-level executive summary report o Phase IX: Detailed technology plan • The implementation of the technology master plan

## 6: Project Success Monitoring

A: • The different phases of the master planning and implementation will serve as milestones to track the progress of the action project. • The Institutional and Instructional Technology sub-committee will monitor the project and provide regular updates to the users, the Quality Council, the President, and the Board of Trustees.

## 7: Project Outcome Measures

A: • Creating a technology master plan • Providing more reliable, efficient, and cost-effective services to technology users • Allowing all key stakeholders to have a voice in the technology plan • Communicating to key stakeholders the progress of the project • Enabling the College to budget appropriately to meet technology needs

## 8: Other Information

A: Project progress will be shared via internal newsletters, NICC website, and reports.

# Project Update

## 1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A:

- RSM McGladrey, a technology consulting firm was hired to assist in performing a technology audit, ascertain institutional and instructional needs, and develop a master plan.
- On-line surveys and focus groups were conducted to solicit input from faculty, staff, and students. They enabled all key stakeholders to participate in reviewing, discussing, and synthesizing the college-wide technology needs
- Interviews with our Computer Information Services (CIS) staff and tour of campus technology facilities were done to understand the current architecture and infrastructure.
- The final report and master plan with time line was presented to the College and accepted by the Board of Trustees.
- The installation of new servers has begun.

## 2: Institution Involvement

A:

- Understanding that we have different stakeholders with diverse needs, the on-line survey was customized for four different groups: administration, faculty, staff, and students. This enabled the consultants to gather more specific information for analysis.
- Over 25 focus groups representing different departments, programs, faculty, and students were conducted. Each group consisted of an average of 8-10 participants.
- Since our College has two main campuses, video conferencing technology was used to enable more participation and minimize the need to travel to one site.
- The task force that was formed to initiate this project included representation from the Board of Trustees, an indication of the strategic nature of this undertaking.

## 3: Next Steps

A:

- We will keep track of the different phases of the master planning and implementation which will serve as milestones of progress of the action project.
- Given the resources needed to implement the master plan, the College has applied for a Title III grant.
- The College will establish a Technology Steering Committee to ensure the alignment of technology investments with

institutional and instructional goals. A key membership will be representation from the technology industry.

- It is essential to share timely update with key stakeholders as the project progresses.
- The Institutional and Instructional Technology sub-committee has initiated the review of the current copying and printing needs of the College in order to seek proposals for a more efficient and greener solution.
- The College has hired a CIS director after a lengthy search. It will be his responsibility to evaluate his staffing needs to support the CIS operation.

#### 4: Resulting Effective Practices

- A:
- The involvement of all major stakeholders group in the process yielded a more complete need assessment. It was critical to allow all key stakeholders to have a voice in the technology plan.
  - The audit conducted compared our current technology practices with industry best practices.
  - We recognize the important role a technology steering committee can play in guiding the College.

#### 5: Project Challenges

- A:
- The master plan shows over \$2 million worth of projects.
  - Three senior CIS staff decided to retire from the College at the end of fiscal year 2010. The College just hired our CIS director after a lengthy search. Two other positions are still unfilled. We have had part-time help and assistance from very capable student workers.
  - The master plan calls for changes in our infrastructure and processes. This will entail changing in how we work individually and together. It is important to prioritize when and how to bring different changes on-line because technological transitions create ripple effect throughout the College.
  - This action project requires the College to be proactive in strategic technology planning and budgeting in providing more reliable, efficient, and cost-effective services to our users. The initial investment in any technology will affect future budgets due to ongoing maintenance.

## Update Review

#### 1: Project Accomplishments and Status

- A:
- The institution appears to be making excellent progress toward meeting the goals of the technology master plan action project. In fact, the amount of work that has been done in completing the cross-campus assessment and development of the master plan in a relatively short amount of time is commendable. This important project is aligned with AQIP categories One: Helping Students Learn; Three: Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs; Six: Supporting Institutional Operations; and Nine: Building Collaborative Relationships.

#### 2: Institution Involvement

- A:
- The project represents a truly institutional effort that has captured the input from a number of constituencies. Including a member of the Board of Trustees is seen as a critical, strategic and smart course of action to ensure that the project has the representation from necessary parties, even at the top levels of institutional administration. The diverse representation is likely one key reason for the ability to create the master plan in such a relatively short amount of time.

#### 3: Next Steps

- A:
- These steps are consistent with the initial project scope. Of the original targets reported in the project details that would signal success or failure, creating the technology master plan and allowing all key stakeholders to have a voice in the technology plan have been completed. It may be helpful for the project team to maintain a detailed timeline that includes contingency steps if certain things do not happen (e.g., Title III grant application is denied). It may also be helpful to develop a clear set of indicators that will signal that the project is complete and self-sustaining.

#### 4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: The reviewer agrees that the inclusion of all key stakeholders in the process of developing the master plan is an effective practice. Given the scope of creating and implementing a master technology plan, its importance in the current academic environment where access, speed, and efficiency are important, and the institution's success so far in completing the action project, this might be a process that could be shared at the annual Higher Learning Commission conference.

#### 5: Project Challenges

A: As noted in the update, a technology plan such as this has far reaching consequences, including changing the way students learn, how faculty interact with each other and engage with students, and how various stakeholders in the institution stay connected as a community. Money is always a challenge in projects such as these; for this reason, having contingencies as part of the master plan, or potentially using the master plan to develop a 5 and 10 year plan that allows for technological innovation, upgrade, and implementation, would be very useful for the institution. This would help ensure that technological innovation remains prominent in times of shifting resource priorities. This is an excellent project that has been well conceived and thus far well executed, and it is likely that the institution is already thinking in these ways.

### Project Outcome

#### 1: Reason for completion

A: The goal of the project was to develop and implement a comprehensive information technology plan for the College. A technology consulting firm was hired to assist in performing a technology audit, ascertain institutional and instructional needs, and develop a master plan. The master plan is in place and being implemented.

#### 2: Success Factors

- A:
- The different phases of the master planning and implementation had milestones that enabled us to track the progress of the action project.
  - The master plan required the College to take a holistic look at technology use and support for both institutional and instructional functions.
  - One of the outcomes of the project was the creation of a Steering Committee that represent different voices in addressing technology needs of the College.
  - The technology infrastructure at NICC has a more solid foundation to build on.
  - One of the successes of the project was our submission and receiving of a five-year Title III grant that supports our various technological needs.
  - The Computer Information Services (CIS) staff are better at communicating with the stakeholders.

#### 3: Unsuccessful Factors

- A:
- Resistance to change was evident when upgrading the infrastructure of our technology set up.
  - Three long-time CIS employees left in disagreement over the direction of the plan.
  - Determining the funding of technology at an appropriate level is still a work in progress.