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*A Vision Statement for a Learning Technology Hub at  
The University of Iowa*

**Report of the Learning Technology Support Review Team**

March 1, 1998

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**Bob Boynton**

Professor, Political Science

**Les Finken**

ITS, Instructional Software Development  
Group

**David Lehman**

ITS, Applications Development Group  
Leader

**Jim Loter**

UI Libraries

**Brenda Sugrue**

Assistant Professor, Instructional Design  
and Technology

**Jo Eland**

Associate Professor, Nursing

**John Folkins**

Associate Provost for Undergraduate  
Education

**Karen Litwin**

ITS, Second Look

**James Pusack**

Associate Professor, German

**Tom Rocklin**

(Team Leader)  
Director, Center for Teaching

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## Executive Summary

In a very real sense, the diagram that appears on the next page comprises the executive summary of this report. The Learning Technology Support Review Team proposes the creation of a new structure to enable ITS to better take advantage of the opportunities in the area of learning technologies that now present themselves at The University of Iowa.

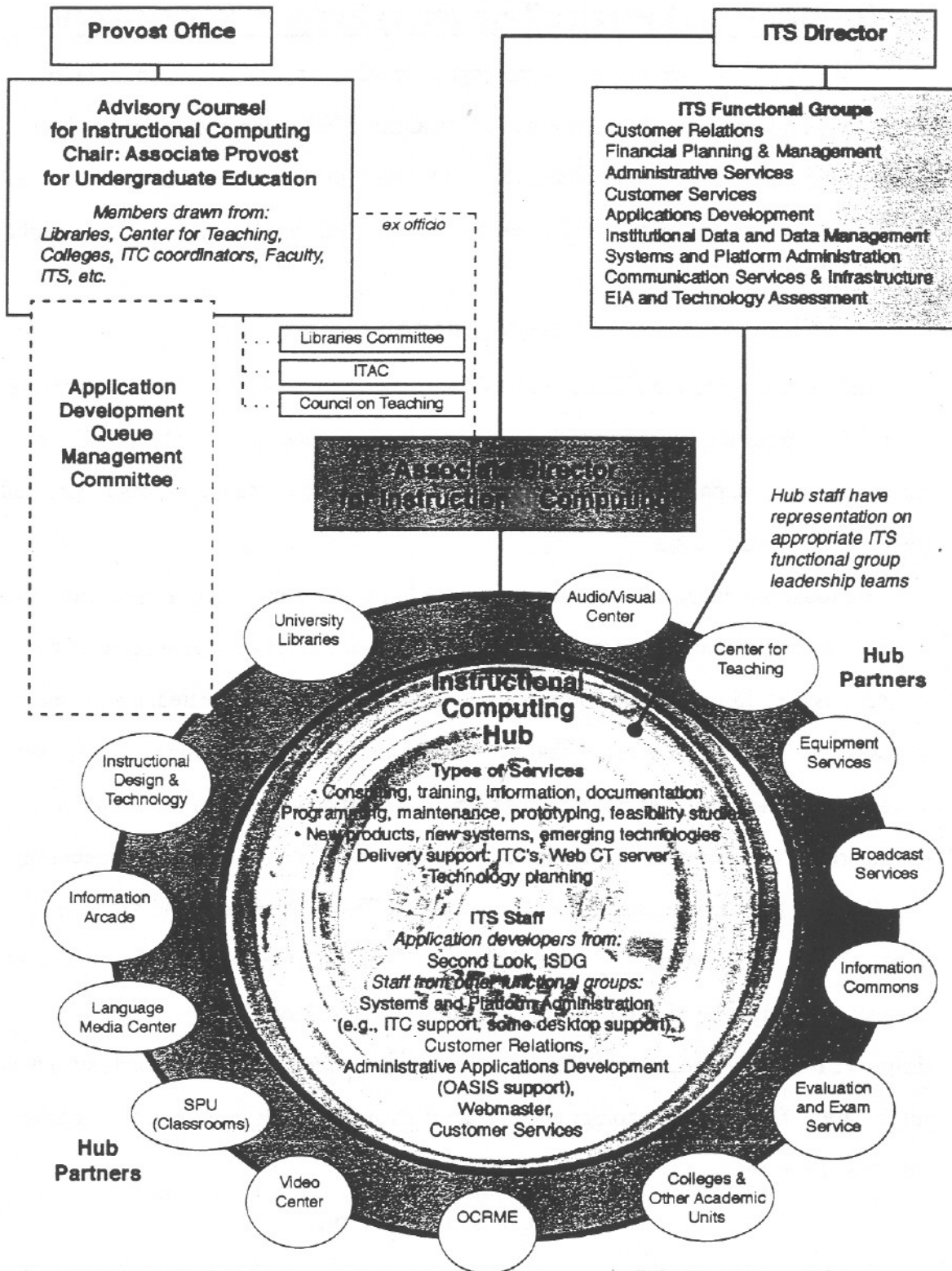
At the core of this new structure is a group of ITS professionals providing a suite of services in support of instructional computing. We call the unit in which they work simply the Hub. This represents a significant change in organization for ITS in that it creates a permanent cross functional team defined by the "market" it serves. We propose that the Hub staff be represented on relevant ITS leadership teams in order to link this new unit to the existing structure.

In order to link the work of the new unit to the academic mission of the university, we propose an active advisory council chaired by the Provost's representative. This council will be responsible for setting broad policies and priorities for the Hub.

In addition, we propose that Hub partners from other units on campus be formally identified. The staff of the Hub and these partners have much to offer each other, given a supporting structure.

The challenges involved in creating the structures we have proposed are substantial. We would not be making the proposal if we were not confident that the potential of the new structure merits the effort needed to overcome those challenges.

# A Proposal for a Learning Technology Hub at The University of Iowa



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*A Vision Statement for a Learning Technology Hub at  
The University of Iowa*

**Report of the Learning Technology Support Review Team**

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Computer and communication technologies are playing a rapidly growing role in teaching and learning at The University of Iowa, and ITS has the opportunity to play a central role in supporting this growth. The recommendations contained in this report are intended to position ITS to take the best advantage of this opportunity that its resources will allow.

**THE TEAM'S CHARGE**

The full charge to the LTSR team is included in Appendix A. The core of the charge is to "Recommend actions that ITS could take to best respond to learning technology needs on campus, particularly as related to its allocations of human resources to particular responsibilities and tasks."

We took our charge and the associated time line to suggest that our responsibility was to get a plausible plan on the table for discussion, but not necessarily to resolve all the specific issues. If a plan such as the one we propose is to be implemented, many details remain to be resolved. We expect that one or more members of this review team will serve on any implementation team that grows from this report and the entire review team stands ready to meet with an implementation team to clarify our intentions as necessary.

Because the focus of this report is on ways that ITS can "best respond to learning technology needs," we have necessarily devoted our attention to ways in which ITS can improve. In implementing our recommendations, ITS will have the opportunity to improve on a very good record. This campus can point to many exemplary achievements in the area of learning technology and ITS deserves ample credit for its contributions to those achievements.

**THE TEAM'S METHODOLOGY**

The team met eight times (for a total of twelve hours) over the course of four weeks. In addition we used a listserv, individual e-mail, phone conversations and the WWW to communicate between meetings.

As suggested by the charge, we began our work by summarizing the recommendations (both explicit and implied) in a number of documents. These documents are listed in Exhibit 1. Each member of the team took responsibility for summarizing one or more documents and adding the recommendations to a central data base. This data base now contains 131 unique recommendations each at least tangentially relevant to our charge. Some are now out of date due to organizational or technical changes, or in a relatively few cases because they have been fully implemented. The review of existing recommendations yielded little that we felt would effect the kinds of change ITS needs to make to respond to learning technology needs. However, the review was extremely helpful in identifying the needs that various campus constituencies have identified.

Exhibit 1: Documents Consulted for Existing Recommendations	
<i>A University on the Rise: A Self-Study for the North Central Association Reaccreditation of The University of Iowa, December, 1997, volume I</i>	<i>A University on the Rise: A Self-Study for the North Central Association Reaccreditation of The University of Iowa, December, 1997, volume II, especially Appendix D-2: The subcommittee reports</i>
<i>Division of Continuing Education, Strategic Plan, 1995</i>	<i>ITS Strategic Plan, June 1995</i>
<i>ITS Strategic Plan for Academic Computing</i>	<i>Blueprint for Networked Multimedia, Office of Information Technology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, November 30, 1995</i>
<i>Instructional Consultation &amp; Software Development Service Rationalization, Author: Steve Wessels</i>	<i>Status of IT service delivery and some proposals for your consideration, Bill Decker, July 2, 1995</i>
<i>An architecture supporting educational technologies, Les Finken, Steve Bowers, David Priebe, Gordon Graber, September 22, 1997</i>	<i>Memorandum to Christopher Squier and Members of the NCA Reaccreditation Steering Committee</i>
<i>Memorandum to Decker, Bennett, Hundley, Langstaff, McClain, Nott, Rex, Wessels</i>	<i>Presentation Systems, OIT Second Level Planning Unit, January 17, 1995</i>
<i>Memorandum to President, Provost, VPS (Learning Technology Costs)</i>	

We also, in a much less systematic way, reviewed relevant documents from a few other campuses. In general, though, we relied on the information gathered for the many local reports we reviewed and the expertise and experience of the team members to generate our recommendations.

In developing our recommendations, we assume that the resources available to ITS to accomplish its goals related to learning technologies will be constant<sup>1</sup> at least in the near term. In fact, though, the structural changes we propose are relatively resource-neutral. In other words, we believe our recommendations make sense as a way of organizing resources even if they are substantially larger or somewhat smaller than they currently are.

### THE VISION

We propose the creation of new unit. We make this proposal after a careful consideration of the magnitude of change necessary to position ITS to play the central role it needs to in helping faculty and students take advantage of the opportunities presented by new and emerging learning technologies. We are convinced that minor changes within ITS will not do the job.

For purposes of discussion, we call the proposed new unit simply the Hub, and that captures its function well. A hub is a "a center of activity," and importantly, it is linked to other structures on which it depends for its functions. The Hub, as we imagine it, draws together ITS personnel who support learning technologies into a tight knit and focused group. It also, as described below, reaches out both to non-ITS service providers and to end users in several ways.

The Hub is diagrammed in Figure 1 which appears at the beginning of this report.

#### **Hub Services and Responsibilities**

The Hub will be responsible for:

- Providing *consulting, training, documentation, and similar assistance* to faculty and staff who are developing and using learning technologies. Some of this responsibility will be accomplished through partnerships with other units (Colleges, Libraries, Center for Teaching, etc.)
- *Producing* instructionally relevant software, including programming (across a range of project sizes), maintenance, and prototyping.

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<sup>1</sup> We make this assumption in spite of our belief that the resources allocated to learning technologies are much too small. We expect that what relevant resource growth does occur will occur primarily in academic units (colleges, departments, programs, etc.)

- *Investigation* of new products, new systems, and emerging technologies with instructional applications.
- *Delivery* of instructional computing resources, through various mechanisms including ITCs, WebCT and other servers, and the like.
- Providing support for *academic unit technology planning*.
- Maintaining a state of the art *development studio* with on-site expertise.

These are all services currently offered by ITS in varying degrees. Assigning all of them to a single highly visible unit with defined ties to both academic planning and campus partners will enhance ITS's ability to allocate resources among the various services and provide improved service in the areas of emphasis.

### **The Hub Staff**

The Hub will be staffed by current ITS personnel whose responsibilities relate to instructional computing. The largest group will come from the current Second Look and ISDG teams. We expect that all members of these two teams will move to the hub. The list of services and responsibilities, though, makes it clear that other ITS personnel will also need to move to the Hub. We cannot be completely specific about what staff members will move to the Hub, but our intent is clear. The people in current functional units who devote time to supporting instructional computing should work together in the Hub. For example, some of the expertise of the Systems and Platforms group now goes to support ITCs. However much of the SPA group's time is now devoted to ITCs should move to the Hub. The same determination needs to be made for all other functional units.

At least one member of the Hub staff should serve on the leadership team of each relevant ITS functional group. There is already precedent within ITS for people who are not necessarily members of the functional group serving on its leadership team and we know of no better way to assure the essential two way communication between the Hub and other elements of ITS.

The title of the person who serves as the Hub's leader was the occasion for substantial discussion. The fact that person will be in charge of ITS's support of the one of the very most central functions of the university argues for a title such as "Associate

Director for Instructional Computing.” At the same time we worried that a person with that title might find it hard to balance the demands of representing ITS to the many internal and external groups interested in instructional computing on one hand and managing the affairs of the Hub on the other hand. We leave it to an implementation team to carefully consider the job description for this position and identify an appropriate title.

We imagine an initial professional staff size of something like a dozen and a half to two dozen FTEs. In addition, the Hub will require support staff.

### **The Hub Advisory Council**

A repeated theme in our discussions was the need for ITS to receive clear direction on issues related to learning technology. We propose an Advisory Council to provide this direction. The Council will be chaired by the Provost’s representative (presumably the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education in the current organization of the office). The Hub’s leader will serve *ex officio* on the Advisory Council. This council will set policy direction for the Hub. For example, the Council might set, and revise as appropriate, goals for effort allocation to the various services the Hub provides.

The Council might also set policy on who is eligible to receive services from the Hub. The LTSR team has reached a consensus that students would receive services through improved ITCs, but would not ordinarily be the direct recipients of other Hub services. Our intention is not to firmly lock the Hub door to students, but assure that service to students is the rare exception rather than the rule. We have less consensus on whether the Hub should provide services to non-instructional administrative units on campus, though we do have a clear consensus that if the Hub provides services for non-instructional units, it should be on full cost recovery basis.

The Council will also need to set more general charge back policies. Charge backs for application development and consulting are rare now. The LTSR team has a strong consensus that funded projects should be charged for Hub services (presumably at full cost recovery rates). The Hub will need to identify a strategy for flexible staffing so that these funds can be applied without unduly disrupting other work.



We also feel strongly that the Hub should provide services for unfunded projects. Exhibit 2 gives examples of the multiple ways a faculty member might receive services from the Hub in the development of instructional computing resources. It seems reasonable that the Advisory Council will develop a policy for allocating efforts to unfunded projects. This policy might be as simple as limiting the number of hours of service a particular unfunded project can receive, or might take characteristics of the project into account.

We expect that after a period of developing the first set of policies, the Council will meet from 4 to 8 times per year and receive frequent reports from the Hub management. The chair of the council will likely to be in close contact with the Hub's leader.

*Application Development Queue Management Committee.*

The ADQMC will consist of members drawn from the Advisory Council, from the Hub, and from among the Hub partners (described below). The leader of the Hub will also serve on, and likely

Exhibit 2: How Faculty Can Benefit From Hub Services  
(in increasing order of magnitude)

- Familiarization with various technologies and their uses via New Media Day, the Microcomputer Fair, and various scheduled workshops throughout the academic year.
- Walk-in consulting about available technologies, equipment needs, grant proposals, etc. up to 5 hours.
- Training provided to departmental staff (e.g. in ITC) at the request of a faculty member or a department. 5-20 hours.
- Ongoing consultation on a longer-term project up to 2 hours per week for a semester.
- Major project support with departmental or external funding paid to Hub or matched by the Hub.
- Major project support awarded in a peer-reviewed competition (similar to ICAP), with guidelines established by the Advisory Board. 5 to 1.5 FTEs for several semesters.
- Major project support that relates to or furthers a goal assigned to the Hub by the Advisory Board. 5 to 1.5 FTEs for several semesters.
- Continuing support for university-wide facilities and services such as the Web, the ITCs, several FTEs.

*Concrete examples*

- A faculty member, perhaps collaborating with other faculty members or staff in his/her discipline, wants to prepare a grant proposal. The Hub helps the project team consider various technologies and the support needs that are required. Hub staff provide specific technical language for the proposal. The grant, if funded, includes funds to hire Hub staff for training project participants, possibly for programming by Hub staff, depending on where the expertise can be found.
- A faculty member receives department release time to develop instructional materials on the web. Hub staff provide consultation at the start of the project and specialized training for ITC staff in the department.

<sup>2</sup> The specific numbers related to resources (FTEs or hours) will need to be determined in accordance with policies developed by the Advisory Council and resource availability.

chair the ADQMC. This committee will meet frequently to receive and set priorities for requests for application development. Requests may originate from any of a number of sources, including inside the Hub. We expect the committee to be able to act rapidly on some small requests. At the other end of the spectrum, the ADQMC may choose to sponsor competitions to identify worthwhile projects. The ADQMC determines the amount of funded activity that the Hub participates in and how these activities are prioritized among other services.

### **Hub Partners**

During the course of our discussions, it became clear that ITS benefits far less than it could and should from the expertise existing in the large number of IT professionals working for the UI outside of ITS. Our charge does not involve identifying ways to capitalize on this expertise outside the arena of learning technologies, but our thinking may be useful in other arenas.

Hub partners are professionals from outside ITS who are recognized for the contributions they can make to learning technology solutions. The Hub needs a process for identifying and certifying these people. One possibility is an unfunded (or in some cases, perhaps partially funded) joint appointment. Faculty members often have appointments in departments outside of the one paying their salary. These appointments are made only in cases where the faculty member's expertise is recognized as relevant to the appointing department's mission and the faculty member's qualifications are similar to people in the appointing department. Such appointments carry relatively little by way of responsibility and rather more by way of privilege. These "0%" faculty are invited to most meetings, are on mailing lists, receive the building keys they need, etc. In short, they are trusted members of the department. Something like this model might work to establish hub partners, or there may be other models that are more effective. We believe it essential, however, that the Hub identify and formally designate trusted partners. Once identified, the hub staff will need to make a commitment to learning from and with these partners. Likewise, the Hub partners will need to make some commitment to contributing to Hub goals. The management of these relationships will be challenging, but we urge the Hub staff

to invest heavily in building the relationships everywhere they make sense. In the long run, the partners will be essential to the success of the Hub.

The Hub partners will be the natural collaborators for projects. In addition to the technical expertise they bring to the partnerships, they are "close to the action" and informed about local needs. We expect that they will be willing collaborators precisely to the extent that their units benefit. In general, these benefits will take the form of early access to valuable technologies, reciprocal access to expertise, and increased privileges in the use of ITS-controlled resources.

In return, partners will be expected to contribute to the work of the Hub. These contributions might take many forms. For example, a hub partner may actually spend time jointly developing a product with Hub staff. Or, hub partners may serve on short term review teams with Hub staff (e.g., the LTSR or the recent Calendaring and Scheduling Team). Hub partners might provide test beds for Hub technology investigations.

Fundamentally, though, what we are recommending is simple in concept and often difficult in practice. The Hub must cultivate truly reciprocal partnerships on the basis of mutual gain.

#### IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

We are fully aware of substantial implementation challenges associated with the plan we propose. Among those that give us the greatest concern are:

- *Articulation with current ITS structure.* ITS is currently organized into functional groups with members of the groups sharing skill sets. The structure we propose cuts the matrix the other way and assembles a group of professionals with responsibilities for something that is approximately a "market." We believe that excellence in the support of instructional computing can only be achieved by bringing together a critical mass of professionals with that task as their sole focus. Every other structure we imagined (including the current structure) ends up pitting instructional computing needs against other demands. And in the scenarios we

imagined and have observed, the other demands overshadow the instructional computing needs.

- *Direction Setting.* We have formulated an Advisory Council to set direction for the work of the Hub. For this to succeed, the members of the Council in general need, and the Provost's office in particular needs, to be willing to dedicate substantial efforts to the process. To a large extent, the Hub will rise or fall on the basis of the quality of the guidance it receives from the Council. We are counting on the Council to both understand the needs of the campus in the areas of instructional computing and make good decisions about attaching priorities to those needs. We are also counting on the Hub to be able to accept the Council's advice.
- *Marketing.* The Hub will need to develop an aggressive strategy to make its services known and understood. This includes not only making sure that users know what services the Hub provides, but also that users accurately know what limitations the Hub places on its services.
- *Location.* A more mundane, but still significant concern involves identifying a physical location for the Hub. We believe the Hub will function best if all of its staff work in the same location and that location is readily accessible to faculty. We are not aware of a space of sufficient size that meets that description.

#### KEY BENEFITS

We expect the following benefits to follow from the successful implementation of these proposals.

- *Focus.* ITS devotes substantial resources to instructional computing, but only a few staff members are in a position to focus on that effort. Further, the people who do devote their primary attention to instructional computing do not necessarily work together on a routine basis. The Hub will bring all of these people together. Some ITS staff members have told us that they feel that much of ITS does not understand the work of those involved in instructional computing. The focus and reporting structure we are recommending may help the larger organization to understand the special characteristics of this work.

- *Improved service.* If the Hub does not meet the campus's needs better than the current arrangement its creation will be a wasted effort. We believe that (a) providing a single point of contact, (b) rationalizing, documenting, and publishing policies governing the allocation of ITS resources to the support of instructional computing, (c) creating a critical mass within ITS to advocate for instructional computing, and (d) creating explicit mechanisms for interaction with the academic community and with other service providers will all contribute to improved service.
- *Greater collaboration.* No one to whom we have spoken believes that ITS can "do it alone." The Hub creates mechanisms to foster the collaboration necessary for support.
- *Alignment with academic priorities* By giving the Provost's Office, the Colleges, and other academic constituencies a direct role in setting Hub policies and priorities, this plan creates a clear responsibility outside of, but cooperating with, ITS for identifying priorities.
- *Increased accountability.* The visibility of the Hub as a unit and the reporting structure we have proposed will both contribute to a sense of accountability (outside of ITS) for the work done there.

The creation of the Hub or something like it will not be easy. The Learning Technology Support Review team firmly believes that the effort required will pay off in many specific ways. We urge ITS to take a bold step.



MEMORANDUM

**To:** Tom Rocklin, John Folkins, Brenda Sugrue, Jo Eland, Bob Boynton, Jim Pusack, Jim Loter, Les Finken, Karen Litwin, David Lehman

**From:** Bill Decker *Bill Decker*

**Subject:** ITS Learning Technology Support Review Team

**Date:** 9 January 1998

I have spoken directly with nearly all of you about participation on an ITS team related to learning technologies. In a few cases, I have left messages for you and trust that receipt of this memorandum will suffice to answer questions. Thanks to all of you for accepting this request from me for assistance. (If you are one of those who has not yet had a chance to confirm your willingness to participate, please call me at your earliest convenience or send an email message to let me know your decision.)

The purpose of the team is to make recommendations to ITS regarding the ways in which we might be realigned and restructured to provide support for instructional technology on campus. My view is that most of the "research and planning" regarding instructional technology directions on campus has already been done. This is as evidenced by the recent NCA special emphasis self-study, our campus directions related to nTITLE, and numerous other efforts. What is needed now is for a small group to consider this work and to make recommendations to ITS as to how it might best align itself both to provide direct support and to partner with others to provide support for these initiatives. Most of you know that we have a group called 2nd Look, another called the Instructional Software Design Group, and various other services for assistance and support. I think it may be time for a "3rd Look" by all of you!

A full charge to the team is attached. I have asked Tom Rocklin to serve as team leader. He and I have already conversed about a few of the details. My secretary, Rhonda Weaver, will be calling to schedule a kickoff meeting in the very near future. I will join you for that meeting to answer any questions that you may have.

Thanks once again!

cc: Provost Jon Whitmore, Vice President David Skorton, ITS Management Team

**ITS Learning Technology Support Review (LTSR) Team  
Team Charge  
January 9, 1998**

**Sponsorship**

The Learning Technology Support Review Team (LTSR) is sponsored by Provost Jon Whitmore and Bill Decker, Associate Vice President for Research and Director, Information Technology Services.

**Purpose / Background**

Many indicators show the increased importance of and interest in learning technologies on the University of Iowa campus, including:

- √ the special emphasis self-study on "The Applications of Information and Communications Technology to Teaching and Learning in a Research University" for the NCA Reaccreditation Review
- √ President Coleman's convocation address on the role of learning technologies
- √ establishment of the Presidential Award for Innovative Instructional Technologies
- √ inter-institutional efforts such as our involvement in CIC Learning Technology Initiative
- √ collaboration among constituent units on campus that provide campus support for learning technologies such as the Center for Teaching, Information Technology Services, University Libraries, and the Center for Credit Programs
- √ inauguration and growth of the nTITLE program
- √ need for resources for computing as evidenced by the special fee request by the College of Business Administration
- √ increase in the number of computers brought to campus by incoming freshmen
- √ increase in use of technology for off campus as well as on campus courses
- √ increase in the number and capabilities of computer classrooms
- √ increased number of units across campus providing instructional technology services leading to confusion among faculty and staff about where to go for support
- √ impending rollout of Internet2 with impact on research and teaching

While ITS clearly plays a significant role in supporting applications of technology to learning, it must do so in response to campus needs and in concert with other units. Given all of the renewed interest in these matters, as noted above, this is an opportune time for ITS to reconsider the ways in which it is structured and aligned to meet its related service obligations. For this reason, we are establishing this team to **quickly** review present circumstances and to make recommendations regarding ITS's role and structure for the support of instructional technology. By acting on these recommendations, we anticipate that ITS may be better able to:

- √ respond to instructional technology needs in both the near and long-term, and
- √ coordinate/consolidate technology support both within ITS and between ITS and partnering units.

## Charge and Guidelines

The LTSR Team is asked to do the following things:

- √ Consolidate the recommendations, issues, and points made in existing statements of needs and goals at the University of Iowa relative to learning technologies. Identify unreported needs if appropriate. (The sponsors are not so much looking for this as a deliverable as wanting this work to guide the next task.)
- √ Recommend actions that ITS could take to best respond to learning technology needs on campus, particularly as related to its allocations of human resources to particular responsibilities and tasks.

The team's report may include, but is not limited to, such things as: listings of the most important types of services needed, organizational or structural recommendations, general technology directions, recommended support responsibilities, and recommended campus partnerships or partnership strategies. Recommendations of the latter type would benefit from some consideration of feasibility, timing, and viability, and such considerations should be made explicit in the report. Finally, the team's report need not be a major document—a verbal presentation to the sponsors, along with a written executive summary and enumeration of recommendations would likely suffice. Indeed, the sponsors may prefer such a “debriefing” approach.

## Activities

In carrying out the charge, the team may wish to engage in some or all of the following activities (entirely as it sees fit to accomplish its tasks):

- √ Identify the key issues in sources such as unit strategic plans, the ITS Academic Computing Strategic Plan, the Continuing Education strategic plan, and the report from the NCA special emphasis study committee.
- √ Identify both those things that are working well and those that are not.
- √ Consider models for responding to learning needs that work well at other schools.
- √ Suggest a balance among the different instructional information technology service types that should be available at the UI today and in the near future. Examples might include: faculty walk-in consultation, helping/enabling faculty to develop their own instructional materials, long-term collaborative development with faculty, and resource centers of various kinds.
- √ Consider ITS's role as a central resource and how that resource should integrate with other instructional technology support resources.
- √ Describe how ITS should connect with the UI instructional community today and offer suggestions on ways to improve.
- √ Consider how these ITS roles and services should be funded or cost-recovered.



## Team Members and Expectations

Because of work already done by campus committees, along with recognition with ITS that changes are needed to improve instructional technology support, an aggressive schedule for the team's work is proposed. The LTSR team will be composed of a small number of core members from within ITS and outside ITS. The team is certainly free to consult with constituent groups as it sees fit, but the expectation is that most of that work has already been done. The effort needed now is to consider the results and develop a set of recommendations for the future. Team members and their anticipated/assigned roles are:

Tom Rocklin	335-0757	Team leader, Director, Center for Teaching
John Folkins	335-3565	Associate Provost, Chair of Electronic Classrooms Committee
Brenda Sugrue	335-5567	Assist Professor, Education, nTITL Program
Jo Eland	335-7035	Associate Professor, Nursing, NCA special emphasis, west campus interests
Bob Boynton	335-2338	Professor, Political Science, developer of "On-line at Iowa"
Jim Pusack	335-2274	Associate Professor, German, Language Media Center, ITAC Committee
Jim Loter	335-5973	Systems Analyst, UI Libraries
Les Finken	335-5467	ITS, Instructional Software Development Group
Karen Litwin	335-5204	ITS, 2nd Look
David Lehman	335-6299	ITS, Applications Development Group Leader

## Schedule/Milestones

The team is asked to meet the following schedule if possible. In fact, a first task for the team should be to affirm the schedule or recommend an alternative one:

January 9	Team identified and charged
January 23	Initial meetings concluded; acceptance or modification of team charge; acceptance of schedule or proposal for alternative schedule
February 27	Report to Provost and ITS Director
March 27	ITS decisions on report recommendations; implementation plan available
July 1	ITS reports to team, Provost, other members of the campus community, other stakeholders