

## IT Shared Governance Study: Executive Summary

**Instructional technology has nearly universal importance to teaching. Stable network connection and reliably functional classroom technology are essential, but these basic needs are often unmet.**

Almost all respondents to the Faculty Survey reported routinely using some instructional technology. Meanwhile, over 40% indicated technology in regular smart classrooms does not meet their teaching needs. Nearly 70% of survey respondents experienced IT problem in the first several weeks of F19, and about 40% of these problems inhibited their teaching in multiple class periods.

**Overall, faculty perceive the problems in instructional technology to be both systemic and fiscal. The faculty recognizes efforts made by individual ITS staff.** Narrative comments from the survey and Faculty Rep Interviews acknowledge that IT problems are primarily due to the lack of resources and staffing or policy and purchasing decisions, and the situation is beyond the control of individual staff.

**Confidence in the current model of IT shared governance is low, both among faculty at large and among those who served on IT shared governance committees.** Eighty three percent of survey respondents indicated that they do not have a voice in IT governance. Sixty nine percent do not feel that IT policies at the College are developed in a fair and transparent way and 71% do not feel that the allocation of IT resources is fair and transparent. These sentiments are stronger among tenure-track faculty. Faculty representatives who have served on IT shared governance committees felt they were unable to play a meaningful role because 1) committee meetings are not the site of decision-making, 2) the meeting agendas are dominated by administrative issues rather than pedagogical concerns, and 3) there is neither time nor an effective mechanism for representatives to consult with a larger faculty body. The lack of a culture of respect at meetings was also identified as an obstacle to meaningful participation, particularly by women and untenured faculty reps.

**Ineffective IT shared governance hinders teaching and the utilization of IT resources.** Narrative comments in the survey and interviews pointed to multiple instances of technological mismatch, where new technology was incompatible with pedagogical needs and/or with existing technology. Faculty Rep Interviews revealed that the target users were not *effectively* involved in the decision-making; in cases where they were consulted, faculty learned their feedback had been ignored only after the technology had been installed or policy implemented. These technological mismatches result in the underutilization of new technology, and a negative impact on teaching. Furthermore, both interview and survey respondents noted cases of unutilized IT resources due to the lack of communication and/or instruction.

**IT policies that are misaligned with faculty needs hinders essential functions of the faculty and may heighten security risks.** Both survey respondents and faculty representatives interviewed noted that a recent policy that deprives faculty administrative privileges to their college-issued laptop hinders daily functionality, especially in the context of limited tech support. When college-provided IT resources are inadequate to their needs, the faculty tend to sacrifice components of teaching or resort to using personal resources; 13% of survey respondents reported they had “given up” on using a college-issued personal device. If depriving administrative privileges turns more faculty to personally-owned devices it could potentially have an adversary impact on security.

**Forms of IT shared governance vary among SUNY campuses, but clear mechanism for faculty input with explicit connections to the Faculty Senate appears fundamental to all models.**

**Transparent communication with stakeholders and aligning IT policies with user needs are generally considered key components of IT governance best practice.**

## IT Shared Governance Study: Recommendations

Based on findings from the study, the IT Shared Governance Study Task Force recommends following actions:

1. The College will replace the IT Governance Committee with a more effective model.
2. The Faculty Senate will coordinate with the Administration to form a joint faculty-admin task force to design an improved model of the IT governance by a clearly specified deadline.
3. The Faculty Senate and the Administration will consider recommendations from the task force in spirit of shared governance and work together for an appropriate and timely implementation.

The IT Shared Governance Study Task Force recommends that the new system of IT shared governance will:

- **Implement a transparent and collaborative decision-making process in IT policies, purchasing, and resource allocations**
  - Build in time and mechanisms for meaningful consultation with stakeholders prior to major IT decisions
  - Assign clear roles and responsibilities to committees and representatives
  - Use common democratic process in meetings, e.g., circulate agendas and minutes in a timely manner, articulate action plan items and follow up on them
  - Consciously foster culture of respect in meetings
- **Create a mechanism that better aligns IT policies with pedagogical needs**
  - Built in a mechanism that routinely gathers faculty input on IT issues
  - Identify ways to recognize and support bottom up faculty innovations and initiatives
  - Consider creating a tech incubator with an iterative process to pilot new instructional technology and test faculty initiatives
- **Institute a system that promotes accountability and evidence-based policy-making**
  - Monitor the use of new technology after implementation and make the data accessible to stakeholders
  - Utilize assessment data and formal faculty input to reflect on past technology decisions and drive future resource allocation
  - Study and build on best practices for shared IT governance at other institutions
- **Establish the faculty governance structure that empowers those who represent the faculty on IT shared governance committees**
  - Consider creating a standing committee whose focus is to advocate IT needs of faculty

## **Resolution on a Study of IT Shared Governance**

**WHEREAS** Information Technology (IT) policies have a measurable impact on curriculum delivery and student learning experiences,

**WHEREAS** the faculty bears the primary responsibility to deliver the curriculum and facilitate student learning,

**WHEREAS** the presence of faculty representatives in IT related committees is necessary but is not in itself sufficient for meaningful faculty participation in IT policy making processes,

**WHEREAS** concerns have been expressed that faculty input may not have been effectively utilized in IT decisions concerning policy, planning, purchasing, maintenance, and operations,

**WHEREAS** meaningful faculty consultation in IT policy making aligns with two of the 2021 Middle States Self Study Institutional Priorities: 3. *Encourage greater mutual understanding, collaboration, and transparency among campus units through an appreciation and respect for each other's contributions towards achieving our shared student-centered goals and furthering the College Mission*, and 4. *Strengthen faculty governance and its relationship with the College's administration for the benefit of students and the broader institution*,

**WHEREAS** best outcomes in shared governance occur when based on empirical data,

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Faculty Senate will form a taskforce of faculty to investigate how faculty input has been provided and how this input has impacted IT decisions.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the task force will document evidence of the faculty experience of IT shared governance through empirical data collection such as 1) interviews with those who have represented the faculty on IT-related issues and 2) a survey or focus groups with the broader faculty body, with appropriate institutional assistance,

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the task force will investigate, such as by contacting faculty governance at other SUNY comprehensive colleges and by researching best practices promulgated by relevant professional organizations, optimal forms of IT shared governance and the appropriate role of a college IT Governance Committee,

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the task force will report the outcome to the Faculty Senate by November 1, 2019.

Submitted by Jillian Crocker, Patricia Harris, Yogesh More, Frank Sanacory, Samara Smith and Ryoko Yamamoto on April 26, 2019. Passed by the Faculty Senate on May 17, 2019.