Summary Report of the Planning Group on Instructional Technology

Lynne O'Brien

Vice-Provost John Harer appointed a Planning Group on Instructional Technology in Spring, 2000. The group -- six faculty members, the Dean of Trinity College and the Director of Instructional Technology -- was charged with developing a vision for how the use of technology can further the goal of attaining excellence in the educational programs at Duke University. First, the group reviewed instructional technology activities at other colleges and universities, industry trends, faculty and student expectations around technology and general models of effective uses of instructional technology. Next, the group examined instructional technology activities at Duke. Planning group members considered how fully the recommendations of the 1997 Strategic Plan for Information Technology in Teaching and Learning had been met and also identified new factors that are significant in Duke’s internal environment.

The planning group concluded that while the technology environment has changed dramatically outside Duke, the applications of technology to teaching and learning within Duke have been modest. The key findings of the planning group’s research were:

- The recommendations of the 1996-97 strategic plan have been only partially implemented.
- Faculty and students have a growing interest in more sophisticated applications of technology for teaching and learning, but Duke currently does not have the infrastructure to support this interest.
- More courses require students to use technology, but students have few options for obtaining technical training and student computing facilities are not adequate for assigned course work.
- The lack of technology support in many classrooms discourages faculty from experimenting with new styles of presentations or in-class use of computers.
- Faculty have more opportunities to learn about uses of technology but often do not have the resources or assistance to follow through on implementing those technologies in their courses.

Finally, the group offered a set of recommendations centered on creating an infrastructure that enables innovative, high-quality teaching and learning at Duke. These steps are necessary to ensure that Duke University continues to provide the best possible education for its students, attract outstanding faculty and keep pace with its peer institutions.

- Provide a set of academic technology tools that simplify faculty use of technology in high interest areas and promote the integration of research into teaching. Ensure that these tools are widely available, easy to use and highly reliable.
- Increase the number of academic technology assistants to provide faculty support with contextual understanding of given disciplines.
- Reshape teaching spaces to support the use of new technologies.
- Ensure that student computing facilities and student technology training opportunities are matched to course needs.
- Provide staffing and funding to support instructional technology projects that have significant impact. Encourage partnerships and collaborative ventures to maximize our investment in technology innovation projects.
- Create university guidelines concerning fair use and intellectual property and identify a specific person or office to consult with faculty on copyright questions.
- Develop a plan for instructional technology assessment that fits with Duke's overall instructional goals.