What is IT Governance?

IT governance provides the conceptual framework, structures, processes, resources and information aligned to university strategies and objectives, enabling us to take full advantage of IT, maximizing benefits, capitalizing on opportunities and gaining competitive advantage. It also provides strategic leadership, establishes campus-wide IT priorities and policies, and is accountable and transparent to the University community. Most importantly, it is part and parcel of university governance, strategy, decision making and planning.

The IT Governance structure as a whole is responsible for:

- Integrating institutional strategic planning with IT strategic planning.
- Establishing campus-wide priorities for IT initiatives that are aligned with institutional goals and priorities.
- Ensuring consistent communication and engagement with campus community on project investments.
- Providing structures and processes that influence the direction and outcomes of technology services, policies and solutions.
- Promoting transparency, accountability, dialogue and communication about IT investments.
- Establishing a project investment fund to enable the execution of investments.

Good Governance

Good governance is about the processes for making and implementing decisions; it is about making ‘the right decisions’ and about following the best possible process for making these decisions. Good governance is about effectiveness, completeness and accountability. Good governance ensures that the institution is getting good value from IT and that the right investments are being made to enable the organization to achieve success. We can simplify this by thinking about the outcome and asking four key questions:

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Based on the “Four Ares” as described by John Thorp in his book The Information Paradox, written jointly with Fujitsu, first published in 1998 and revised in 2003
To enable good governance, there are three components that constitute IT Governance:

- **Structure**
  - The structure component pertains to the activities, the way those activities support the goals of the university, and the people who manage those activities.
  - Structure components include mission, mandate, terms of reference, roles, conflict-resolution mechanisms, accountability, transparency, and constituent groups.

- **Process**
  - The process component defines decision-making rights as well as paths and policies that are used to measure and control the way decisions are made and executed.
  - Process components include alignment, commitment, motivation, leadership and meaningful participation.

- **Communication**
  - The communication component defines how the results of processes and decisions will be monitored, measured and communicated.
  - Communication components include information sharing, meetings, stakeholder engagement and reporting

**Governance Design**

In 2012 the approach to renewing IT governance started with a set of objectives that identified “what” we are trying to achieve and “how” we are going to achieve this, summarized as:

- **Make smart choices**
  - Effective engagement & analysis
  - Align within institutional vision
  - Futures-ready
- **Make them stick**
  - Decisions and actions viewed as legitimate
- **Make them quickly**
  - Small, focus decision body
  - Rely on existing position authority
- **Make it happen**
  - Resources identified & allocated
  - Clear responsibilities & accountabilities

To ensure a successful outcome, the following set of objectives were established as a basis for change:

- Ensure that all committees have clear charters including purpose, membership, communication, frequency, etc. (focusing on the right things).
- Ensure that all committees have clear reporting linkages and decision paths.
- Encourage the safe dialogue and debate on initiatives and sequencing/prioritization
- Refine processes to ensure initiatives are proposed, reviewed and approved in a timely manner.
- Ensure the process is transparent, responsive, inclusive and effective.
- Ensure campus/stakeholder engagement occurs at the right level with the right stakeholders.

**Governance Structure**

The IT Governance structure (Appendix A) is designed to model the institutional hierarchy and governance structure. From a strategic alignment perspective, governance is designed to align with
how institutional decisions are made. This is facilitated through the committee structures and linkages to institutional committees and governing committees such as Executive Council, Integrated Planning, Dean’s Council and President’s Advisory Council.

Figure 1, shows a simplified IT Governance structure with a focus on the IT Executive Committee and the Priority and Governance Review Council.

The IT Executive Committee (ITEC) is responsible for the oversight and delivery of all IT Governance project investment decisions, including the overall strategic direction of institutional IT projects. The purpose of ITEC is to ensure the effective and efficient use of technology in enabling the university to achieve its strategy and goals within acceptable levels of risk. ITEC is tasked with and accountable for ensuring that technology services deliver value and that expected benefits from new investments are fully realized.

The Priority and Governance Review Council (PGRC) is responsible for reviewing, evaluating and recommending IT Governance project investments to the IT Executive Council (ITEC), and to ensure the effectiveness of IT Governance. PGRC reviews project investments for alignment with institutional goals, evaluates the benefits and risks, and makes recommendations to ITEC for investments. The committee also creates and sustains a set of processes for IT governance and prioritization that are timely, transparent, and clearly aligned with the university’s missions.

Figure 2 shows all of the governance committees. The committees are structured into portfolios that represent academic, administrative, research and information technology. The portfolio approach allows for committees and sub-committees to discuss initiatives, challenges and priorities in context,
and avoid any confusion about purpose or alignment. There are four primary committees: Academic and Student Services Committee (ASSC), Administrative Systems Operations Committee (ASOC), Research Computing Advisory Committee (RCAC) and the Information Technology Advisory Committee (ITAC).

The purpose of the Academic & Student Services Committee (ASSC) is to recommend and prioritize academic and student systems and technology development projects (new and enhancements) that align with the operational and strategic needs of the institution. The systems governed by this committee include student administration systems (e.g., records, admissions, registration), student support administration systems (e.g., advising, services for students with a disability, student health services), and educational technology (learning management systems, test scoring, course experience survey). All plans, projects and priorities applicable to the student and academic information systems and supports listed above fall within the mandate of ASSC.

The purpose of the Administrative Systems Operations Committee (ASOC) is to recommend and prioritize administrative systems projects (new and enhancements) that align with the operational and strategic needs of the institution. The systems governed by this committee include finance, budget, human resources, pensions, facilities management, development/advancement, research administration and ancillary applications. Student administration and related systems are the responsibility of the Academic
and Student Services Committee (ASSC). All plans, projects and priorities applicable to the administrative information systems listed above fall within the mandate of ASOC.

The purpose of the Research Computing Advisory Committee (RCAC) is to recommend and prioritize projects (new and enhancements) in support of the research computing environment across the institution. The users of research computing have widely varied requirements; from those who use computing facilities as tools incidental to their research, to those for whom computing is central to the gathering and analysis of data, to those for whom research in computing is the primary focus of their work. Some requirements are best met at the institutional level while others require localized facilities and support. Many researchers also require access to resources further afield including access to cloud computing, remote data bases, collaborative environments, etc.

The Information & Technology Advisory Committee (ITAC) will provide a forum for discussing enterprise information and technology and service changes that may have major campus impact and/or significant cost for the university. The committee will advise on reducing duplication of services and realizing economies of scale, improving quality of IT service, adopting best practices, and complying with audit requirements.

For each of the committees, see the committee terms of reference for more information.

Sub-committees & working Groups

Sub-committees are ongoing groups who are responsible for issues and decisions in certain areas of responsibility or interest of the university. Working groups are defined as time-bound groups' assigned specific problems to solve or tasks to accomplish. IT governance committees can form working groups as needed. Working groups meet for a set timeframe to accomplish specific objectives related to resolving an issue or implementing an IT strategy; they are not considered standing or ongoing governing bodies. Working group membership can consist of IT governance committee members or any qualified personnel identified by IT governance committee members.

For each of the sub-committees, see the sub-committee terms of reference for more information.

Governance Membership

Committee membership is designed to be representative of the campus community. Generally, members are selected to represent academic, research and administrative units of varying size. Specific details of the membership designated for each committee can be found in each of the committee terms of reference.

Members are recommended to the governance Chairs by governance members, by members of the campus community, or through a research process to identify potential members who represent a specific unit or group that is not currently represented in the governance membership. If specific expertise is desired or required for a particular project of governance, experts are identified and recommended to the governance Chairs. After recommendations are considered, committee members are finalized by the committee, its parent committee and/or the Priority and Governance Review Council.
**Agenda Setting**

Members of each committee propose agenda items to be discussed in their respective committees. Agenda items can also be suggested by anyone in the university community (non-committee members) by directly contacting a committee Chair or the CIO’s office. Agenda items for each committee are vetted through that committee’s Chair. The committee Chairs and CIO meet regularly to coordinate the timing of committee efforts and ensure proper communication, inclusion and prioritization.

**Project Funding**

The majority of projects that are presented to IT Governance will require a source of funding. The following are several sources that are available to fund projects:

- **Local funding** is one-time funding that is provided completely from one campus department and/or unit.
- **Shared funding** is one-time funding that is provided through the cooperation and coordination of multiple departments and/or units.
- **Hybrid funding** is one-time funding that is provided by both campus departments and/or units, and by IT Governance.
- **IT Governance funding** is one-time funding that is provided only by IT Governance to fully fund a project.

Where funding is provided by IT Governance, this funding is only available to cover one-time project costs. All ongoing or operating costs must be alternatively sourced and be identified in advance in order to approve project proposals.

**Governance Process**

In IT Governance, the project proposal is the starting point of turning an idea into a project. Ideas can be brought forth by anyone to a committee chair and/or the CIO, and formed into a project proposal. The purpose of the project proposal is to describe the idea, strategic alignment, compliance requirements, institutional impact and value proposition of the idea. Project proposals are developed using the project proposal template and with the assistance of a Project Manager and/or the Project Management Office. Once the proposal is complete, it is submitted to the appropriate committee and added to the IT Governance Committee Project Registry.

The receiving committee will review and discuss the proposals for accuracy, completeness and alignment. The committee will then either request changes or accept the proposal. Proposals that have a limited impact, are normally less than $20,000 dollars or require limited resources can proceed to planning and execution. Proposals that exceed these thresholds must be ranked by the committee using the project ranking guidelines and submitted to its parent governance committee for review, acceptance and ranking.

Once the sub-committees and parent committees have reviewed and ranked the proposals, they are submitted to the Priority and Governance Review Committee (PGRC). This committee will then complete a cross-committee project review to ensure accuracy, completeness, institutional alignment and a collective understanding of the projects. Once reviewed, the committee can then make a recommendation to the IT Executive Council (ITEC) to support the project proposal. Alternatively, if
PGRC identities that additional information or changes are required to a project proposal, the feedback will be provided to the committees and project sponsor.

ITEC will review the recommendations and provide a memo to the IT Governance committees containing decisions of support, funding and any additional requirements. It is important to note that ITEC will only consider funding requests that are one-time and are normally greater than $20,000; ongoing funding will not be considered.

All projects that are granted approval to plan must be assigned a Project Manager and use the Project Management Office (PMO) to coordinate the project process including monitoring and reporting of project to governance committees. Finally, prior to receiving approval to execute a project plan must be developed and submitted to the Project Review Committee (PRC) who will perform a technical review.

**Project Ranking**

The purpose of project ranking is to provide guidance to IT Governance Committees on how to collectively decide on the importance (rank) and sequence of projects to submit for funding and approval. The Project Ranking Guidelines and worksheet provides committee members with proposal evaluation criteria, enabling them to rank one or more proposals within the set of active, waiting and proposed projects. If there are existing project proposals that have been previously ranked but the project have not started, then committee members will be asked to re-rank those projects with the new ones.

Once each committee member reviews and ranks project proposals, the aggregated results of project rankings by committee members will be used in committee discussions to allow the committee to reach a consensus on the project proposal rankings. The committee ranking of proposals will result in the order for which projects will be sequenced and executed once approved by ITEC.
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