CAUSE97 CIO Meeting

At the beginning of the meeting, I asked each participant to write down the question he/she would most like answered in this session or at the CAUSE conference. There were 60-70 people in attendance, but I didn't get quite as many responses. The themes were very consistent, though, and can be grouped into the following categories:

**The Web: outsourcing or not? what infrastructure is needed? how to plan and support web-based classes? what are the best web support strategies?

**Support Issues: what to centralize and what to deliver locally?
--what approach to service and support is most viable and cost-effective?
--student computing/networking access:
--at non-residential campuses
--labs vs. notebooks (see Chronicle Dec. 5 Infotech)
--what is needed to support laptops?
--how much does it cost?

**Measurement:
--assessing technology efforts--how to do?
--employee productivity
--what should the appropriate amounts for technology spending be?

**Faculty issues:
--incentives for using technology in teaching
--how do you deal with faculty refresh issues

**CIO issues:
--merging IT and the library
--what is the value to the institution in creating a CIO position?
--how do you avoid burnout?
--who should CIO report to?

**Planning
--what is the best organizational structure to support strategic planning?
--how do you balance long-term planning and short-term issues (e.g., Year 2000)?
--how do you begin and coordinate a strategic plan within a budgeting process?

By far the most common question topics, however, were those on which the discussion focused: PEOPLE AND MONEY.

The funding questions are best summarized by one attendee's "$64 million question": how do you keep the IT organization [and infrastructure] updated to be able to provide for the ever-increasing demand in services without going bankrupt?

Staffing issues included the following: recruiting and retaining staff in the absence of raises and merit awards, high industry salaries impacting the ability to hire and retain even student workers, and advanced techniques for national recruitment of IT professionals.

After these questions were submitted, we began discussion on how to fund technology, contain costs, and develop appropriate cost accounting. Topics covered were the value of leasing (mixed), chargebacks for NEW services being easier to implement, and revenue generation with web development and rental of labs (when are they free?). Other topics included trying to do the same things more cheaply, life cycle planning, alumni donations, the importance of consortia, and the possibility of web advertising as a revenue generator. There was a lengthy discussion about the value of cost accounting, culminating in five important questions we all need to address:
**How much does it/IT cost?
**How do we fund it/IT?
**How much do we need?
**Why are we doing it?
**Are we doing the right things?

After the MONEY discussion, the next hottest topic, PEOPLE, was brought up. Training and the importance of keeping training budgets was discussed; management and communication skills are as important as technical ones. Other techniques for retaining staff suggested include giving staff exciting new projects, rotating key staff, shaping user expectations, giving immediate rewards and recognition, and allowing front-line support staff time off regularly for training, learning software, and working on long-term projects. Other techniques included celebrating both individual and team achievements, reclassifying staff regularly (easier with broad banding classification schemes), regular performance evaluations, and allowing--even promoting--outside consulting opportunities. Giving staff supervisory opportunities with students was seen as a possible plus for those wanting management experience.

Recruitment strategies included developing a recruitment brochure (Northern Arizona U.), hiring young but having one star to train others, hiring hourly workers with a pool of money, contract hiring for short-term periods (1-3 years), and outsourcing (reference to web site on outsourcing: ucinfo.emich.edu/outsource/cause/index.htm). There was no magic bullet to deal with the hiring/retaining crisis.

The other topic more briefly discussed was distance education, also defined as "alternative modes of delivery" or "remote collaboration." Issues included quality, certification/assessment, academic life cycles and interactivity. We discussed cost myths and raised the following questions:
*can you make a net profit (everyone agreed that the claims of moneymaking were exaggerated)?
*how much can you increase access?
*do you need to do it because of competition, fear of losing market share?
*what are the intellectual property rights issues and how do we address them?

It was a great turnout both days! Looks like a good idea to have two meetings. Please give any other feedback you have about the meetings. Thanks to everyone who came and participated.

---------- -
Barbara Horgan, Executive Director of Information Resources - - Butler

University, 4600 Sunset Blvd., Indianapolis, IN 46208 - - Phone: (317)
940-9008 | E-mail: Horgan@Butler.edu -