2013-11-14 Focus Group Summary

Pitzer must respond to External Pressures and Expectations. IT affects our response, both in content and in our ability to gather data.

1. We exchange data, and have common business practices, with the 5Cs
2. We report data to external agencies, some legal, some government, some related to ranking or surveys. WASC and others.
3. Professional organizations have standards and expectations.
4. Conventional media and social media affect perceptions of Pitzer.
5. Funders, parents, alumni want information
6. There are many expectations of information and resources when recruiting prospective faculty, students, and staff.

Pitzer Culture affects the way we use IT, and sets the context in which we can improve IT.

1. Pitzer works on a personal basis. There is a clear need to standardize, but we do not want to give up personalized systems or services.
2. People prefer a Just-In-Time approach to IT resources. Planning is hard, and I-Need-It-Now is not uncommon.
3. Pitzer is generally anti-system. True in a political sense, but also in a process sense. We like to do things our own way
4. Pitzer has a an expectation of transparency and access.
5. Pitzer is sensitive to environmental sustainability.
6. We do not generally invest in cutting edge resources. However appropriate for our needs, this sets a context of expectations.
7. We are accustomed to redundant emails.

Data Flows. There are many data exchanges. A few examples:

1. FinAid exchanges data with Admissions
2. Admissions get data from students, parents, common app, vendors
3. Faculty get data from the Library
4. HR exchanges data with DoF, Treasurer, Facilities, Campus Safety
5. Many CUC services have data flow to/from Pitzer. E.g. Blackboard

We have many sources of data. And some programs that process data, even if they do not store it. An incomplete list of examples:

1. CashNet
2. Work orders to Facilities
3. ConnectEd
4. CX
5. Ultipro
6. Datatel
7. Blackboard
8. OnBase
9. PowerFAIDS
10. Sakai
11. EMS
12. EmpCenter
13. Facebook
14. Portal
15. PeopleAdmin
16. SlideRoom
17. FireEngineRed
18. Doodle
19. WCOnline
20. Qualtics

Data Integration Issues

1. We need to standardize data in order to share it. Lack of standards can make reports hard to obtain (or mis-interpreted when they are obtained).
2. We have many fragmented systems. The use of different usernames logging onto different systems is telling.
3. The use of different systems, without enforced standards, makes our overall system fragile to any change in definitions of data.

Communications Issues

1. Email is overused. Volume is high, probably increasing, but we see diminishing returns. Email announcements are often repeated, thus training receivers to delete since they will be notified again. There is little sense of responsibility to search out info, rather we expect it (announcements) to come to us. And then we can ignore it when it does.
2. Senders and Receivers have conflicting needs. Our current use and culture does not recognize this, which results in something like a Nash equilibrium -- no one person can make a change that is helpful to him/her, and yet a different overall system might help everyone.
3. Part of the email issue comes from communications in a flat organization.
4. Paper communications still exists, often because signatures are required.
5. There is little consideration of appropriateness of communication modes, e.g. email, txt, RSS, Facebook, IM, twitter, tumblr, and so forth. Different types of information or announcements might best be sent by different channels.

Needs and Desires

1. Paperless systems
2. Mobility (ability to work on mobile devices over wireless), realizing that face-to-face interactions are also crucial to Pitzer culture.
3. Adequate storage and access for rapidly expanding needs.
4. Improved reliability and robustness of IT services.
5. Customer Relationship Management, where customers are students, parents, etc. (This might apply to customers of IT services, too, but that was not the intent here.)
7. Simpler, and possibly fewer, interfaces to student data.
8. Better calendar sharing and scheduling, for classes, meetings, appointments,
announcements.
10. Historical data snapshots for reporting. E.g. Data Warehouse
11. Better communications modes, so information can be targeted rather than blasted everywhere.
12. A system of digital signatures, to enable paperless processes, would be a big win.

High Level Issues and Concerns

1. Need to consider overall Pitzer technology spend, including the various offices. Having each office try to solve its own issues can defeat better solutions that require more extensive collaboration.
2. Funding models. Who pays == Who decides. Need appropriate balance between central decisions and distributed decisions.
3. Need more planning, and less reaction to crises and events.
4. In house IT expertise needs to adapt as systems and processes change. Having more knowledge about business processes (as opposed to IT processes) would improve support. But this has a cost in IT resources.