Appendix B: Building the Foundation for the Plan

In November 2009, IS&T began working on a strategic and operational plan. The initial phase of the planning focused on gathering data to build a new foundation to support the future of IS&T and the services we provide to the MIT community.

Our goals and approach included focusing on improving customer relationships and service delivery. Our process for data gathering was designed to support transparency, teamwork, and inclusion. The process included:

**Listening and Learning** – The new Head of IS&T held informal one-on-one conversations with 70-plus MIT faculty and staff.

**World of the Customer (WOTC)** – Senior Staff interviewed 30-plus customers from across the Institute to better understand their business needs and pain points and how IS&T can support them in their work.

**Internal Assessment and Feedback: Pulse Groups (PG)** – The new Head and representatives from Senior Staff gathered data from about half of the IS&T staff and met with randomly selected groups of IS&T staff to identify what’s working and what’s not and brainstorm potential improvements within IS&T.

**Internal Assessment and Feedback: Findings Review** – The IS&T Leadership Working Group (LWG) reviewed eight reports of studies completed over the last three years – including the IT@MIT Task Force Report – and identified high-value recommendations and findings.

**Customer Environment and Feedback**

**Listening and Learning**
Several themes emerged from these conversations with faculty and staff:

- Need to identify and communicate **core services**
- Want **transparency** of services, expenses, people and projects
- Need clearer **governance structure** for IT decision-making
- Need for cohesive **customer view of IS&T** and **better working relationships**
- Need to **improve service delivery** including setting expectations, making commitments and honoring those commitments
- Want to see **decisions made** and **delivering on them**
- Should have **sponsors for all projects**
- Want increased **partnerships**
- Need **strategies** for administrative, academic and research computing
- Need build/buy/outsource **strategies**
- Need more **standardization**
- Would benefit from more **balance**
World of the Customer (WOTC)

Questions We Asked: World of the Customer Participants

We asked approximately 30 customers a series of nine questions with a goal of increasing our understanding of the interviewee’s (1) area, (2) customers, (3) IT trends.

About Their Area
1. Tell me a little bit about what’s going on in your area these days.
2. What is important to you and your area?

About Their “Customers”
3. Who do you serve and what do those “customers” care about?
4. What causes your “customers” to complain about you or your area?
5. What shifts, if any, have you noticed in your “customers’” preferences in terms of what they want from you lately?

About Their Technology
6. What emerging information technology trends get you excited? Why?
7. If you could predict the top two information technology issues for your organization over the next five years, what would they be? What makes them stand out as particularly important?
8. What does the IT world of your “customers” look like? What kinds of IT do they use? How important is IT to them?

About Them
9. What are your favorite departments to work with? What do they do that makes the relationship rewarding?
What We Learned: World of the Customer Overarching Themes

Customers want an always-on, unified, web-based experience.
- 24/7
- Online
- Mobility

Customers want high-quality, responsive, easy service delivery.
- Deliver as promised, when promised
- Responsiveness; be responsive and there when needed
- Keep it simple
- Broad services from soup to nuts

Customers want IS&T to know them and their world.
- Work in partnership
- Understand their worlds
- Not everyone wants the same thing; sometimes customers want divergent services

Customers want clarity and transparency.
- Communicate
- Cost-certainty/Transparency
- Governance and portfolio management

Selected Customer Quotes from WOTC Outreach:
During our interviews with customers, we heard the following statements.

“IT…they rely on it like the air they breathe.”

“…The computer is everyone’s primary and central method of accomplishing daily tasks. When a computer has a problem the first response we often hear is: I can’t do my job without my computer!”

“Like many other organizations, we are also trying to do more with less.”

“No response is a response. Should get back to folks even if the answer is to give a later date or bad news.”

“People stop asking for things when nothing gets done.”

“IS&T needs to think about…do you want to just make the trains run on time?”
Summary of WOTC Interviews:

Service
- Listen to us
- Be responsive
- Keep it simple
- Fix it quickly when it breaks
- Deliver on commitments; service delivery

Expectations of IS&T
- Core services
- Perception versus reality: What does IS&T do?
- IS&T cohesion
- Transparency: costs, people, services
- Governance: portfolio management and funding decisions
- Make decisions and act

Ease of Use

Unified, web-based experience
- More of our IT services available online
- Interoperability of consortium products/standards
- Mobility
- Collaboration tools
- Accessibility: anytime, anywhere

Customer closeness
- Process orientation: help simplify their business processes
- Understand their business
- Manage customer expectations

Getting things done
- Find a professor/sponsor for all projects
- Partnering over time
Internal Assessment and Feedback

Internal Assessment and Feedback: Pulse Groups (PG)

In December 2009 and January 2010, we held four pulse groups soliciting information from approximately half of the IS&T staff.

1. LWG Pulse Group, 12/18/2009 with 39 employees (LWG + Senior Staff)
2. Employee Pulse Group, 1/12/2010 with 39 employees
3. Employee Pulse Group, 1/21/2010 with 40 employees
4. Employee Pulse Group, 1/25/2010 with 39 employees

Questions We Asked: Pulse Group Participants

We asked four questions of the employees who participated in the pulse groups:

1. What are the top three issues that you believe need to be addressed in IS&T?
2. What activities do we engage in as an organization that might NOT add value to MIT?
3. What do you enjoy or find rewarding about working in IS&T?
4. What gets in the way of you doing your job in the way you think it ought to be done?

We asked the IS&T Leadership Working Group the same four questions plus two additional questions:

1. One of the five values Marilyn, the Head of IS&T, talked about at the last All Hands meeting was transparency. How well are we living this value?
2. What doesn’t IS&T understand about its customers and their needs?

What We Learned: Pulse Groups Overarching Themes

People love MIT
- Pride for institution
- Ability to affect world beyond MIT
- Flexible environment

Talented people work in IS&T
- Smart, knowledgeable, skilled
- Dedicated and hard-working

Unclear vision, strategy, and governance make it difficult to prioritize
- Unclear strategic vision
- Lack of governance
- Unclear on success measures
- Avoid making decisions
- Heroics
Management issues: Lack of trust, collaboration, and communication

- Lack of trust
- Gap between those doing the work and those leading the work
- Micro-management
- In-fighting
- CYA attitude that impacts productivity
- Inconsistent rewards and ratings
- Skill-based issues that need to be improved at a personal level through learning and training
- Communication: disconnects between management levels, lack of transparency, intergroup communication, communication up and down

We don’t work together well

- Don’t feel treated with respect and dignity
- Morale
- Starts at top and trickles down
- Uncivil behaviors

Inconsistent processes, project management, and accountability

- Planning not valued
- Too much planning, not as much implementation
- Given bits of information
- Overworked
- Don’t have control over the businesses and then we get dinged because we can’t meet deadlines
- Project culture: perception that new development is favored over maintenance
- Inconsistent processes and tools
- Hard to say “no”
- “We are sometimes set up to fail with unrealistic expectations”
- Inconsistent support for professional development
- Unclear performance measures; inconsistent performance assessment

Extreme customization gets in the way

- Reactive application development undermines long-term sustainability
- IS&T customizes rather than buying and doesn’t get value out of customizations
- Don’t fully use existing packages
Internal Assessment and Feedback: Finding Review

The IS&T Leadership Working Group (LWG) reviewed eight reports of studies completed over the last three years – including the IT@MIT Task Force Report – and identified high-value recommendations and findings.

The following reports were reviewed:

4. IT @ MIT Task Force Report (2009)
6. ESD Student Report Findings (2009)
7. IS&T Readiness Assessment (2009)