

Texas A&M University-Texarkana
Information Resources Strategic Plan

FY 2003 - 2007

Technology and Distance Education
Texas A&M University-Texarkana
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Texarkana, Texas 75501

Texas A&M University-Texarkana Information Resources Strategic Plan FY 2003 – 2007

Goals, Objectives, Strategies, Programs:

Texas A&M University-Texarkana Agency Goals

1. Provide quality educational opportunities and support services.
2. Expand academic programs in response to the changing needs of the service area.
3. Ensure availability of educational opportunities, physical facilities and student support services through expanded financial support.
4. Ensure high levels of motivation, productivity and creativity among faculty, staff and administrators.
5. Improve the university's efforts in carrying out policies governing purchases and public work contracting to foster meaningful and substantive inclusion of Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUBs).

Information Resources Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Programs

Information resources functions of Technology and Distance Education at Texas A&M University-Texarkana support all goals identified in the Agency Strategic Plan and in the State Strategic Plan for Information Resources Management. One particular agency goal, however, identifies and summarizes the mission of the unit and supports the goals identified in the State Strategic Plan for Information Resources Management.

Agency Goal #1 Provide quality educational opportunities and support services.
IR Goals – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Other agency goals supported:

Agency Goal #2 Expand academic programs in response to the changing needs of
the service area.

Supported by IR goals relating to collaborative initiatives with external entities to provide the means for bring new programs and courses to our campus through the use of technology. IR goals – 3, 4

Agency Goal #3 Ensure availability of educational opportunities, physical facilities and student support services through expanded financial support.

Supported by IR goals relating to the pursuit of funding, both internal and external, for the expansion of technology for university constituencies.

IR goals – 1, 3, 4

Agency Goal #4 Ensure high levels of motivation, productivity and creativity among faculty, staff and administrators.

Supported by IR goals relating to expanded services for university personnel and continuous training opportunities in the use of technology for more effective and efficient operation. IR Goals – 1, 2, 3

Agency Goal #5 Improve the university's efforts in carrying out polices governing purchases and public work contracting to foster meaningful and substantive inclusion of Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUBs).

Supported by the IR goal to maximize the use of HUB vendors, using state maintained web resources and other resources as available, in the purchase of information resources equipment and services. IR Goal - 5

The information resources goals of Texas A&M University-Texarkana support the goals of the State Strategic Plan for Information Resources.

State Goal #1 – Transformation of Government – State government will leverage information resources to deliver services to citizens irrespective of government boundaries.

Supported through collaborative agreements with other agencies for enhanced interactivity, expanded web-based access for both personnel and constituents, ability to access more information regarding the university activities, ability to do business with the university via the web, and coordination with all state agencies (as directed by state guidelines). IR goals – 1, 3, 4

State Goal #2 – Information Management Practices – State government will enhance agencies' performance of their mandates and missions through the appropriate use of information resources.

Supported through surveys and increased communication with personnel and students to provide the most efficient access to information resources, analysis of new technologies to ensure that they are the most effective for the needs of the university and closer examination of IR activities and the results of those activities to conform to state standards and guidelines. IR goals – 2, 3, 5

State Goal #3 – Stewardship of Information – State government will ensure the privacy, security, integrity, and relevance of its data.

Supported through training activities regarding confidentiality and security for all personnel, monitoring of all contractual agreements with external agencies maintaining databases for the university and monitoring and improvement of risk assessment and disaster recovery methods. IR goals – 2, 3

State Goal #4 – Access and Participation – Citizens will have access to multiple information technology channels to interact with Texas government entities.

Supported through internal surveys and exit surveys and interviews of graduating students to insure that the university is effective and efficient in providing information services to our constituents, investigation and implementation of emerging technologies as well as collaboration with other state entities to enhance access to university resources. IR goals 1, 2, 3, 4

Information Resources Goals

IR Goal #1 Provide the highest possible level of access to information resources.

IR Objective Increase student accessibility to information resources.

IR strategy Provide increased computing services and access.

IR strategy Improve student access to information resources.

Program Academic programs - student access to student services, registration, financial aid, library – student use of computing resources.

IR Objective Increase accessibility to information resources for the entire university community.

IR strategy Increase services accessible through an Integrated Library System.

IR strategy Increase services accessible through web-based interfaces.

Program Academic programs - student access to student services, registration, financial aid, library – faculty/staff access to IR resources for research and administrative functions.

IR Goal #2 Insure efficient and effective use of existing technologies.

IR Objective Provide appropriate services consistently and reliably.

IR strategy Increase IR staff effectiveness.

IR strategy Provide opportunities for university personnel to increase technological awareness and competency.

Program Faculty/staff training – IR staff training – communication between IR and faculty/staff.

IR Objective Insure reliability of existing information systems.

IR strategy Solicit feedback from staff and users.

IR strategy Maintain all systems for data reliability.

IR strategy Maintain all systems for data reliability.

IR strategy Create intranet for use by university personnel.

Program Risk assessment, disaster recovery and business continuity – communication between IR and faculty/staff.

IR Goal #3 Expand services to provide assistance for utilization of new technologies.

IR Objective Maintain a high level of IR staff awareness to emerging technologies.

IR strategy Provide opportunities for staff development.

IR strategy Actively investigate new methods of delivery for current services.

Program Faculty/staff training – IR staff training.

IR Objective Maintain a high level of IR staff awareness of utilization of information resources in all disciplines.

IR strategy Promote formal avenues for all university personnel to communicate new developments in their discipline.

Program Faculty/staff training – communication between IR and faculty/staff - communication between IR and external IR

resources in business, industry and other governmental entities.

IR Goal #4 Form collaborative alliances with other agencies to maximize resources available to the communities in the service area of the university.

IR Objective Provide maximum services to residents in the university service area with minimal increases in resources required.

IR strategy Increase capabilities for sharing information resources.

IR strategy Extend information resources connectivity to other agencies as applicable.

Program Academic programs - communication between IR and faculty/staff - collaboration with business, government, and educational entities.

IR Objective Expand educational programs in the university service area with minimal increase in resources.

IR strategy Collaborate with other educational agencies to provide and/or receive courses delivered by technology.

IR strategy Continue and increase assistance for university faculty to utilize technology in the delivery of courses.

Program Academic programs – collaboration with business, government, and educational entities - faculty/staff training.

IR Goal #5 Utilize Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUB).

IR Objective Meet state guidelines for the use of HUB vendors.

IR strategy Provide information to all areas regarding HUB vendors for acquisition of services, software and hardware.

IR strategy Increase utilization of technology providing access to and dissemination of information regarding HUB vendors for acquisition of services, software and hardware.

Program Utilize HUB vendors as required by state guidelines.

Databases and Applications:

Texas A&M University-Texarkana maintains no major databases on site. All major databases are located and maintained at other agencies. Details for the specific system should be indicated on the respective agencies' Strategic Plan.

Student Information System - Maintained by Texas A&M University-Commerce computing services.

Budget, Personnel and Payroll - Maintained by The Texas A&M University System computing services.

Financial Accounting - Maintained by The Texas A&M University System computing services.

Human Resources - Maintained by The Texas A&M University System computing services.

Information Resources Management Organizations, Policies and Practices:

Priorities: - An Instructional Technology Committee drafted a process which considers methods for prioritization of resources for IR activities. This includes consideration of users (students, faculty, staff), relationship to specific agency goals, as well as age and condition of physical equipment. A manual for use by staff regarding access to centralized databases has been written, approved and distributed and is updated annually. Suggestions for IR activities originate in all areas of the university. These are routed through the office of the Director of Technology and Distance Education. Selection and prioritization of IR activities is accomplished through the Academic Council, chaired by the Vice President for Academic Affairs and consisting of the president, vice-presidents, deans and directors of all units. Review and input is requested from the University Planning and Assessment Committee, the Curriculum Committee and the Faculty Senate as appropriate. The Administrative Council, consisting of the president and the vice-presidents, reviews plans and final approval rests with the president of the university.

Planning: Planning for information resources is seen as a continuous process. IR planning utilizes a variety of inputs to include all areas of the university. The Director, Technology and Distance Education (TDE) is responsible for oversight of the planning process. Annual plans are developed in light of input from the administration, from evaluation instruments collected during training sessions, from surveys conducted with the faculty and staff, from environmental scanning to maintain awareness of new technologies and resources, from other internal department planning documents, from institutional and state plans and directives, from analysis of work orders to determine needs, and from student course and exit

surveys. The director has input from the University Planning and Assessment Committee, the Curriculum committee, the Faculty Senate, the library, admissions and registration, student services, business office, as well as TDE. Plans are submitted to the Academic Council for discussion, comment, and recommendation to the administration. The president has final approval on all plans submitted. Current planning procedures also include collaborative and consortial efforts with other educational agencies including: Region VIII Educational Service Center, Northeast Texas Community College, Texarkana College, Northeast Texas Network (NETnet), and several public schools in the region.

Quality Assurance: This function is the responsibility of the contracting agencies for all external applications and databases and procedures should be available in their strategic plans. Internally, all projects to date have fallen under the “Low Focus” category as defined by the Internal Quality Assurance Guidelines of the Department of Information Resources (DIR). Procedures utilized fall within these guidelines but have not, to date, been formalized and documented. The director of TDE will be creating a process of formal documentation of these activities within the next year as appropriate. A risk management plan for IR has been created in conjunction with the Physical Plant Manager and the Safety and Security Officer. This was accomplished through a Information Resources Risk Assessment Task Force created by the president of the university. A university-wide inventory of data and recovery systems has been implemented and will be presented to the IRRA Task Force for review and recommendation on an annual basis.

Personal Computer Replacement Schedule: Texas A&M University-Texarkana utilizes low-end technology as defined by the DIR and has not yet implemented a formal Personal Computer Replacement Schedule. Faculty and staff personal computer replacement is reviewed annually, with priority given to end-users requiring more complex applications and to end-users with personal computers more than 2 years old. End-user productivity requirements and the needs of students for academic coursework are the priorities utilized to determine replacement needs within annual budget allocations.

Student use computers are housed in 3 classroom/laboratories. Two of these rooms are used for instruction with the third maintained as an open lab for ad hoc student use. In practice, the personal computers in one classroom/laboratory are upgraded annually with the newest displaced hardware rotated to the open lab. This ensures that the university is able to provide our students with access to the latest hardware that will reliably run the most recent software applications available. Replaced student use computers are used to fill needs of part-time staff and mobile carts distributed across campus through our Media Services department as they are found to be adequate.

With the implementation of an automated, web-based work request system, TDE has begun a discussion regarding formalizing this process utilizing the DIR's PC Life Cycles deadlines. This system allows a variety of reports to be generated containing information on individual PC utilization, repair and assistance requests.

Procurement: All information resources technologies are acquired under the requirements and guidelines as outlined by the state and such processes are overseen by the university purchasing area. Texas A&M University-Texarkana has entered into its first university-wide leasing arrangement for software with the acquisition of a Microsoft Campus License for all personal computer operating systems, workstation application software and student computer lab software. As the university utilizes these applications in a teaching environment as well as a workstation environment, the newest software is required in order to provide our students the latest tools for productivity. A cost analysis indicated that this licensing program would be more cost effective over the next 5 years than purchase of perpetual licenses. During the next year the Director of TDE will be analyzing the benefits of hardware leasing arrangements utilizing the guidelines provided by the DIR.

Disaster Recovery: This function was the responsibility of the Texas A&M University-Commerce (formerly East Texas State University) campus until September 1997. The responsibility for major databases and applications continues to rest with the agency providing the service as noted above. Internal responsibility and awareness has increased since the merger with The Texas A&M University System and with the creation of the department of Technology and Distance Education. The university president has created an Information Resources Risk Assessment Task Force which is charged with determining the current state of IR risk and recommending processes and procedures for risk reduction and recovery in all areas of the university utilizing state guidelines. Processes, procedures, software and hardware are inventoried and analyzed by this group on an annual basis. Functionally, tape backup is currently done for all internal servers daily. All personnel are made aware of the need for data backup and TDE works with each individual to assist them in maintaining their personal computer backup schedule. All computers purchased are required to be equipped with tape and/or removable media drives (e.g. Zip drives) for backup of data. The feasibility of centralized, automated backup and restoration services is being investigated by TDE personnel at this time. The West Texas Disaster Recovery and Operations Center has been contacted by TDE personnel and the cost effectiveness and feasibility of utilizing their services is being determined.

As all major databases and applications are located with external agencies, wide area network (WAN) connectivity is critical for the university. The Director of TDE and the Vice President for Finance and Administration created a Business Continuity Plan during the Year 2000 testing and remediation activities which is still in force and applicable to the current university IR environment. Procedures

have been identified for maintaining services (registration, business office functions, financial aid, procurement, etc.) in the event of loss of connectivity to external applications and have, in fact, been implemented successfully during periods of actual loss of data service. WAN connectivity for the university is the responsibility of the Trans Texas Video Network (TTVN), a component of The Texas A&M University System. TTVN has developed a plan for creating network path redundancy and Quality of Service (QOS) for this WAN. A proposal is being prepared for submission to the Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund Board for funding for this purpose.

Data Center Operations: Texas A&M University-Texarkana does not maintain any central data center operations at this time. All data center operations are accessed through contracting with external agencies as noted above.

Standards: Technology and Distance Education at Texas A&M University-Texarkana is aware of and makes every attempt to comply with and implement information resources statewide standards as documented in Standards Review and Recommendations Publications (SRRPUB) as noted:

Statewide Network Standards: Network connectivity that spans more than one non-adjacent building, or interconnect more than one agency is provided by TTVN.

Building and Campus Wiring Recommendations: Texas A&M University campus consists of three buildings. The most recent Academic building complies with the state recommendations as overseen by Facilities Planning and Construction of The Texas A&M University System. Funding has been allocated for renovation and/or expansion of the older buildings and during this process all wiring will be updated to the current state recommendations.

IP Address Assignment: The university obtains IP address assignments from TTVN and complies with the state standard.

Personal Use of E-Mail & Internet Services: The university complies with Policy 33.04, Use of System Property as required by The Texas A&M University System. The Director of Technology and Distance Education is in the process of requesting a Computer and Web Use committee to draft and submit university rules concerning this area to the Administrative council for review utilizing the state standards as guidelines for this activity.

Video Conferencing Standards: Texas A&M University-Texarkana utilizes video conferencing as provided by TTVN meeting requirements for connectivity as required by the network.

Sale or Transfer of Computers and Software: Texas A&M University-Texarkana does not transfer software to other entities. Surplused computers are transferred to TDE where all storage media is erased or removed as

required by security considerations and all drives reformatted. Hardware is then transferred to the appropriate state agency as directed by the university inventory personnel.

Internet Domain Names for Government Entities in Texas: The university complies with this standard. One domain is registered to Texas A&M University-Texarkana (tamut.edu) .

Directory and Locator Services: The university maintains one directory for telephone and email addresses of employees driven by an SQL database.

The Year 2000: The university is fully Year 2000 compliant.

Personal Naming Convention for E-Mail: The university complies with this standard having a email naming convention of Firstname.Lastname@tamut.edu .

World Wide Web Design and Coding Guidelines: University web pages are designed to be accessible to the widest number of citizens possible. Pages are regularly reviewed for compliance with accessibility guidelines, do not use any special features of a particular browser, and are designed for low-resolution monitors. Graphics and other components with high bandwidth possibilities are created with the low bandwidth user in mind. Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) technology is utilized with all collection of information from students and staff when utilizing the web for transactions such as registration, financial aid, checking grades, etc.

E-Mail and Document Interchange Guidelines: The following are utilized for the university email system - Simple Mail Transport Protocol (SMTP), Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions (MIME) attachment support and Post Office Protocol (POP) delivery.

Digital Signatures and Certificate Authority Guidelines: Texas A&M University-Texarkana utilizes a digital certificate obtained through VeriSign, Inc. for use with its web interface for students and faculty obtaining data from the Student Information System. VeriSign, Inc. is on the approved list of PKI service providers as provided by the DIR.

Unsolicited Bulk E-Mail (UBE)/"SPAM": TDE personnel work with all university employees to minimize the impact of SPAM as much as possible. However, in the atmosphere of open discussion and inquiry which is the necessary environment for a university, this continues to be a matter of concern and attention.