Northern Virginia Community College  
Information Technology Committee  
November 17, 2017  

eMeeting Minutes  

Present: Shahrokh Ahmadi, Teba Aljumaili, Christian Bartley, Kathy Bohnstedt, Andrew Cornell, Jacqueline Gage, Jennifer Lerner, Jill Mitchell, Ahmad Noor, Steve Sachs (chair), Allen Sinner, Alison Thimblin, Scott Wood  

The meeting focused on the process for creating a new Strategic IT Plan.  

The first topic was to determine the type of plan the committee wanted to develop. Three different types were talked about: a very general process/goals/values plan like the VCCS IT strategic plan where specifics were left to a separate implementation plan, a plan that focused on weak or new initiatives rather than overall goals/priorities like the new NOVA Strategic Plan, or a very specific set of measurable goals that would be maintained or achieved by the end of the plan. Among the key points discussed were the following:  

Set 2-3 high level goals  
Make it student focused  
Include goal and steps to the goal  
Include specific measurables  
Plan for yearly review of progress on the plan  
Align the plan with the NOVA strategic plan and relate it to specific needs to accomplish the NOVA plan  
Create it as an overarching blue print with an action plan  

The committee consensus was to develop a plan that was a cross between the current college plan and the current Strategic IT Plan. The plan would include things important to maintain, with measures tied to effectiveness and not just existence or accomplishment. The strategic plan should be accompanied by an action plan/strategies plan. The plan should consider, but not necessarily be limited by, resource requirements. The new strategic IT plan would have high-level goals with more specific measurable objectives that provide the meaning and context for each goal. The action/strategies plan would include more detail on resources required and the gap with the current state at NOVA.  

The second topic was on how to involve the college community in development of the new strategic IT plan. It was pointed out that there was a great deal of data from the college community through annual IT surveys and the work of last year’s Council on Learning Technology Resources. Among the key points discussed were the following:  

Based on past experience, a limited number of people might participate  
Many in the community do not know much about technology and could not help set future goals  
Need to use participants’ time wisely, they will not repeatedly respond to multiple different requests  
Could draft a plan based on existing data and send it out for feedback instead of starting with a blank page and asking for input
The Information Technology Committee is itself a diverse group representative of the college community—though there are no students on it. Could ask about general goals first, then follow-up and ask about specific objectives/strategies. Some recommended we avoid surveys and use live forums instead, or use wiki-like feedback mechanisms for asynchronous input. Others wanted to combine forums with surveys. In the discussion it was pointed out that live events require a great deal of effort and have a cost. A number of members questioned the actual value of a live forum and that the limited participation might not be worth the effort. The committee agreed we wanted as broad an input from the entire NOVA community as possible.

The committee consensus was to prepare a robust draft plan from available data and then seek feedback. The draft plan would include both general goals and specific objectives. The plan might include annual milestones where appropriate.

The third topic was to determine the time horizon for the strategic IT plan. The committee agreed that the plan would cover 2019-2024. The whole plan and feedback process needs to be complete by mid-October 2019 at the latest to allow time for final Administrative Council approval. This would allow NOVA to develop its next strategic plan that could guide the next strategic IT plan. If necessary, the strategic IT plan could be extended as we approach 2024 if it was premature to draft a new plan.

The fourth topic was to determine how to write the draft plan. After some discussion, the committee agreed to make it a group process by the whole committee rather than assigning it to a small subcommittee. The whole committee will work on drafting the high-level goals. After determining the high-level goals, small groups could take each of the goals to develop specific objectives and measures to present to the whole committee as discussion starters.

The drafting process will begin at the next meeting. Dr. Sachs will lead a group process that is designed to produce goals in a very efficient manner. The process will involve each committee member drafting a set of goals at the meeting, then sharing them with the group prior to any discussion. Each member will then prioritize goals from all those presented. Based on that prioritized list, the committee will discuss the goals and identify those that will become part of the draft strategic IT plan. If necessary, that discussion can carry over to the following meeting in January. The meeting will be held through WebEx. After determining the goals, consideration of appropriate measures will be considered at a subsequent meeting. At that point, the goals can be given to small groups to work on specific objectives.