



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Web Services Review

Academic and Enrollment Services

The Web Services department participated in a self-study and review during 2007-2008, culminating in an on-campus peer review in February 2008. In summary, here are the key points of the external review report along with the recommendations made by the reviewers.

EXTERNAL REVIEWERS

Web Services invited professionals from various California universities to participate in the external review assessment. With the variety of systems and services that the team supports, the reviewers were selected based on their responsibilities, knowledge and use of systems that closely mirror areas for which the USF Web Services team is responsible. The reviewers included:

- Al Nunez, Associate Director of Communications, California Polytechnic State University
- Peter Mentzer, Director of Web Services, Dominican University of California
- Matt Collins, Director of Application Systems, California State University, East Bay

CAMPUS VISIT: February 29, 2008

Before their visit, the reviewers were provided the Web Services self-study document and sample questions that they would be asked to report on following their visit. The visit was conducted over a one-day period on February 29, 2008. During this day, the reviewers met with Web Services staff, the Senior Associate Dean/University Registrar, Director of Publications, key Admissions staff and various groups of stakeholders throughout the university. These meetings focused on the Content Management system, the Prospect Management system and web applications and support. Stakeholders were instructed to provide feedback related to services and interactions with the Web Services department. The outcomes and recommendations of the external review team are summarized below.

1. How did the external review committee rate the quality and reputation of the services provided by Web Services?

The committee rated the Web Services department quality and performance as "very good." The group does a good job of keeping up with technology and providing access to that technology for end users. The department is staffed by highly knowledgeable and customer service-oriented team members. They set an example for communicating with clients and meeting client needs. The team exemplifies qualities to which other operations can aspire as a cohesive unit. The team collaboration is most evident and can stand as a model for others to follow. Additional positive qualities of this department include: professionalism, strong communication skills, good management, good relations with clients and peer

departments, and high-quality deliverables.

2. What are the most important issues that emerged from the external review process?

- Clients are extremely happy with the team and deliverables, but would like to see quicker turn-around times on their requests. The department can find ways to improve turn-around times by creating efficiencies such as automating creation of graphic postcards using a Flash template or using third-party web services to speed up the development time in producing multi-media pieces.
- One reviewer stated, "The type of work requires consistent training and other learning opportunities to meet the constantly changing technology associated with the work that they do. Methods of electronic communication are developing at a rapid pace and since this group is tasked with utilizing these methods, understanding these changes must be one of the group's goals." While the teams' services more than meet our clients' needs, there needs to be a concentrated effort on training and professional development to keep current with the latest web technology. This will allow the team to produce more multi-media offerings and keep their skill sets current.
- "Resources to support your operation seem to be lacking to the level of which you may require; particularly in terms of equipment and software to match your scope of serving the entire university." Hardware and software resources, physical space, and training needs must be addressed so that the team can produce deliverables more efficiently and use new toolsets to work faster and more quickly meet the demands of our users.
- One issue that emerged is how will our future vision be mapped out? With the rapid development of online tools and services, where should the Web Services department focus our energy? Should the team be a service provider of content or focus on providing the tools and training to allow clients to generate their own content?

3. What specific recommendations were made by the external review committee to the Senior Associate Dean?

- Re-evaluate processes and work flows to determine if efficiencies can be created to allow for faster development and turn-around times.
- Re-evaluate resources related to hardware, software, space and training needs for the team.

4. In the opinion of the external review committee does the Web Services department reflect an understanding of and commitment to the University's Vision, Mission and Values?

The Web Services department demonstrates a commitment to the University's Vision, Mission and Values through the excellent customer service they provide to their clients. The team's daily support of the university website and web applications,

allow for various departments to promote learning and teach students. Web Services plays a key role in communicating the strengths of our educational programs to current and prospective students by maintaining the USF web site and through sending email campaigns.

5. In what way does the Web Services department contribute to achieving the goals of the University?

Web Services provides services and tools that allow staff to serve and communicate with students and the overall university population. The services the team provides advance the overall mission of the University, as well as the more specific divisional goals of their clients.

6. What is the timetable to respond to the external review recommendations?

- Web Services will evaluate what projects and work flows can be revised to help create efficiencies and improve turn-around times as quickly as possible.
- Web Services will put together a request for hardware, software and training needs and specify what items are critical to continue to keep pace with current web technology and trends.

7. What general issues are crucial to understanding the reviewers' report?

The team currently serves a large population and client-base. The demands and requests made of the team from our clients must be understood in the context of how much the team is already responsible for. With daily maintenance tasks and responsibilities of supporting current systems and users, this does not leave much time for researching new technology, taking on new projects and attending training.