Purpose of the Engagement
This engagement was designed to provide the Chief Information Officer at UCLA with consulting assistance in the development of an information technology strategic planning approach specifically focused on the information technology planning needs of UCLA.

Approach
In order to accomplish this purpose, 10 institutions of similar size and focus to UCLA were identified. These included:

- University of Washington
- Carnegie Mellon University
- University of Michigan
- University of Chicago
- University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
- Harvard University
- University of Illinois
- MIT
- Stanford
- University of Maryland

An attempt was made to obtain the latest IT strategic plans and to schedule telephone conversations with the CIOs from each of these institutions.

Status of Project
As of June 17, 2001, telephone conference calls have been conducted with the CIO's from the University of Washington, Carnegie Mellon University, University of Michigan, Harvard University, University of Maryland, and the University of Illinois. Conference calls have also been scheduled with the CIOs from MIT and Stanford University. These latter two calls will take place prior to the end of June.

The search for IT strategic plans from these institutions resulted in the following findings:

- Although several institutions are trying to align their IT planning efforts with institutional strategic plans, none of the ten schools has an institutional IT strategic plan.
- One (MIT) has a written departmental IT strategic plan.
- Three (CMU, UMD, and University of Illinois) are in the process of developing IT departmental plans.
- Four (University of Michigan, Stanford, Harvard and UNC) have some type of planning documentation available, but it falls short of being a written plan.
- Two (University of Washington and University of Chicago) have no planning documentation.
- One institution (University of Illinois) is in the process of developing an institutional IT strategic plan.

Best Practices
Based on the telephone conversations and review of IT planning documentation available from the ten institutions, the following “best practices” have been identified:

1. **Organizational Culture:** Organizational culture varies widely across the institutions whose CIOs were interviewed, and it was clear that to be successful in IT strategic planning, the institution must closely align the IT planning process and the language used to describe that process with the institution’s organizational culture. For example, the CIOs of University of Washington and Harvard University, stated that the highly decentralized, entrepreneurial culture of their institutions made it necessary for them to concentrate on strategic “positioning” or “opportunistic planning” rather than on the use of traditional planning processes. On the other hand, the CIO of the University of Illinois stated that his institution “expects vision-setting and planning at the campus level” so he is currently leading an effort to develop an institutional IT strategic plan.

2. **Stakeholder Buy-in:** It is mandatory to obtain buy-in from all stakeholders within the institution for the IT planning process, particularly if the institution is seeking to develop an institutional IT strategic plan. CIOs interviewed used a variety of means to gain stakeholder involvement and buy-in. For example, University of San Diego uses task forces around various initiatives, Harvard University engages in discussions with “communities of interest,” and the CIO of the University of Washington directly seeks out stakeholders on a 1:1 basis within the departments.
Again, the method of stakeholder involvement tends to mirror the institution’s organizational culture.

3. **Planning Takes Time**: Preparing the institution for IT strategic planning can take time which may be frustrating to some individuals. However, it has been demonstrated that failure to take the necessary time to plan appropriately can result in difficulties in implementing the results of the planning process. With one exception, all CIOs who were actively involved in strategic planning activities reported spending 12-18 months to complete the initial planning effort.

4. **Educating Participants**: Successful IT planning processes include an up-front period of “education” to help all key stakeholder groups understand IT trends and issues that may impact the institution. This means education for the IT planning team as well as for the general community. For example, The University of Michigan and the University of Illinois both spent extensive time at the Dean level talking about IT issues and trends in order to establish high level agreement on IT directions and support for the planning process. The University of Illinois also commissioned several white papers on IT that were developed by cross-departmental IT professionals across the institution.

5. **Role of the CIO**: It is the role of the CIO to help the institution to “strategically think” about IT even if the institution has no interest in formalized IT strategic planning. The CIO should be responsible for providing leadership in the development of vision and values or guiding principles related to the use of IT, facilitating the discussion of institutional IT strategic directions, aligning the goals and objectives of the IT organization with institutional directions, and overseeing the implementation of results of the planning process. Several of the CIOs, including the CIOs of the University of Michigan and Carnegie Mellon University, reported that they had “jump-started” the planning process by publicizing their personal visions and values regarding the use of IT in the university. All CIOs interviewed stated that they believed their institutions held them responsible for this type of leadership and for the successful implementation of IT across the institution.

6. **Plan Components**: Comprehensive IT strategic plans include the following components: Vision; IT organization mission; strategic directions, areas or initiatives; guiding principles or values; rationale or planning assumptions to support the strategic directions; outcome statements or measurements; and responsible parties. Even those institutions that had no plans for creating a formal planning document felt the need to develop and communicate several of these components. Three of the institutions, University of Michigan, University of Illinois and MIT all spoke to the importance of including outcome statements or measurements.

7. **Executive Sponsorship**: Successful planning requires executive sponsorship at the highest levels of the institution particularly if the institution is highly decentralized. Such sponsorship should include encouraging involvement of individuals in the planning process, supporting the use of appropriate resources, and investing their own time in institutional strategic discussions. For example, the CIO from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill cited leadership with a clear vision for the use of technology as one of her critical success factors. The CIO from the University of Michigan also spoke about the significant impact that the establishment of a Presidential Commission on the Use of IT had on her ability to interest the university community in strategic planning.

8. **Communication**: It is important that institutions develop and carry out orchestrated communication plans to ensure that there is adequate communication about the planning process before, during and after the process is completed. The CIOs interviewed discussed a variety of methods they have found to be successful including the use of traditional communication media such as newsletters, presentations at departmental and user group meetings, and publication of the planning efforts on the institutional web site. On an interesting note, Carnegie Mellon University does not plan to make a big announcement about the IT strategic plan currently under development. Instead, this CIO stated that she will promote one goal or initiative at a time over the academic year to provide clear focus on strategic directions. All CIOs interviewed clearly stated that face-to-face communication is a critical component of the communication effort and each plans to spend significant time meeting with individuals and groups throughout the university to discuss the planning process.

---

**COLLEGIS**