



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Educating for Change

The School of Social Work

Information Technology Vision Plan

Academic Year 2007 - 2008

December 1, 2006

The University of Texas at Austin

School of Social Work

2007 - 2008 Information Technology Vision Plan

Summary of Requests

The School of Social Work has used its ITAC allocation to create and support state-of-the-art classrooms, a student computer lab, and student work areas. Our classroom infrastructure is complete except for a 230 seat auditorium. This year's proposal is to provide the instructional technology and physical renovations to make this auditorium a first class teaching facility; assist faculty in developing curricula enhancements that take advantage of classroom technology; increase our capability to capture, produce, and distribute learning materials; and provide ongoing maintenance and support for our existing resources.

Classroom Technology System for Auditorium \$250,000

Installation of a permanent LAITS auditorium configuration, lighting, sound and physical renovations to make our 230 seat Utopia Theatre a state-of-the-art instructional and small conference facility.

Curricula Development and Distribution \$80,000

Funding for faculty release time and TA support to develop Web-based instructional materials, promote better use of technology classrooms, and pilot new ways of integrating technology into the field of social work.

Production Studio and Capture/Web Cast Equipment \$30,000

Equipment to capture, produce, and Web-cast classroom activities; produce curricula materials; digitize our extensive video library; and provide TA support.

Lifecycle Funding for IT Classrooms, LRC, and Network and Staff Support \$100,000

Lifecycle replacement funding for equipment and recurring funds for software licenses, ITS consulting, service contracts, and support personnel.

Total Request \$460,000

Introduction

We view the Vision Plan as our working document, mapping out directions and expenditures for the coming years. We realize that our yearly request far exceeds our formula allocation and we do not expect full funding from ITAC. However, this is the cost of the vision we are working toward. We have followed our vision plan directly each year by making incremental payments, when possible, or putting money aside to save for full payment at a later time.

For the 12 years we have been in this building, the School of Social Work has made great strides building a technology infrastructure geared toward network connectivity and academic instruction in the classroom. Coming from an inadequate teaching facility we recognized the value of learning space and accepted the challenge of modernizing and improving our building. Our vision is to build an instructional technology infrastructure of network, classrooms, and resources to furnish our students and faculty with a first class teaching/learning environment.

Because of high implementation costs, the realization that each new implementation requires recurrent maintenance and support costs, and the relative size of our IT budget, we proceeded incrementally on our plan in phases. Each phase required cutting costs and saving some of our ITAC allocation until we could afford the necessary capital outlay for new technology, while maintaining a budget to support our growing resources. When we first moved into our building we began phase one, building an Ethernet network architecture, a student computer lab, and an instructional classroom with up to 30 workstations. In the next two phases we installed LAITS consoles in 6 classrooms, three at a time. Last year we completed phase 4 installing a console in our IT classroom and projection systems in three conference and one seminar room that share a LAITS console on a moveable cart. Throughout this time we continued to maintain our existing resources and made network improvements with switches, fiber to the NOC, and building-wide wireless. We also became increasingly reliant on services provided by ITS and began to actively seek collaborative projects and resource sharing with other schools and colleges.

Our initial goal to build a classroom infrastructure has been almost achieved. We can complete our goal with installation of a LAITS console and required physical renovations to turn a 230 seat 'junior high' auditorium into a state-of-the-art instructional teaching facility. However, this phase is the most expensive. It requires substantial renovations to make the auditorium a viable teaching facility, but we are committed to completing our classroom infrastructure. While we seek additional sources of funding and reserve our ITAC money to put toward renovating the auditorium, we struggle to support the innovation and special projects needed to meet today's challenges in an ephemeral technological environment. Once our classroom space in this facility is complete, we believe our ITAC allocation can be used, as it was primarily intended, to stimulate innovation and meet future challenges.

New challenges require us to expand our "facility" beyond bricks and mortar. We are challenged from within by increasing student enrollment and through field placements, professional commitments, study habits, etc., that demand curricula delivered outside the traditional pedagogy. Our program is expanding with dual degree programs and may change dramatically with the University revisions to the core curriculum. We are challenged from outside by our community: some recently ravaged by natural disaster, others victims of cuts to travel and professional development budgets, and many with limited access to help, resources and expertise in their area. We are also challenged by other schools of social work offering degree programs here in Texas, and more importantly, on-line from anywhere in the US. Our vision reflects these challenges and follows our IT goals

- Network connectivity, instructional classrooms and student resources;
- Curricula development with technology integration and Web-based delivery;
- Network, equipment and support for instructional production and delivery

Overview of Current IT Programs and Infrastructure

Vision Mission and Goals

We are committed to our students. We will continue utilizing our ITAC funds to provide them with the best possible technology and support for education and training. Social work is a multi-faceted cross discipline profession. Our students need both specialized knowledge and a broad perspective on all issues affecting the human condition. The study of social work requires vast information

about people, society, and service. Our mission, "*Through excellence in professional education, research, and service, The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work provides national leadership to promote social and economic justice, alleviate critical social problems, and enhance human well-being.*" and core value "*We believe that, in order to enhance the social work knowledge base, the attainment of our mission requires critical thinking, professional development, and meaningful scholarship. As we improve our ability to transmit this knowledge to students and others effectively, we are better able to alleviate suffering and to promote social justice in the communities we serve.*" direct us to move beyond the classroom. We need information technology not only to improve the educational experience for our students in the classroom, we need resources for development and delivery into the community in which they will be working. A large portion of our student's educational experience is in field work. We seek to maintain open channels of communication between those students, their placement agencies, and our classrooms. Our vision is to support faculty and students, making it easy for them to access and use appropriate resources both in and outside the classroom and to provide outreach to the community through our students, facility, and our digital resources.

Small schools face formidable challenges in attaining and maintaining technology resources and support staff necessary to operate at a level consistent with other departments. We can easily exhaust our annual allocation simply providing equipment, software, and maintenance support. We are forced to proceed incrementally into the future, often holding funds from one year in reserve to fully fund improvements in the next. This severely impedes our ability for innovation as we compete with other schools of social work and produce the graduates, research, and products that represent us as a flagship institution. The FCI, CLC, Microsoft agreement and departmental volume pricing have made significant contributions to offset our operating expenses. We look to The University to continue to fund and provide resources such as DIIA and ITS low/no cost software purchasing, network and security support, and help desk training and support.

IT Programs

ITAC funds currently support five areas.

Network Infrastructure

Our network infrastructure for wired and wireless connectivity is still fairly new. In consultation with ITS, we maintain our network maintenance, upgrade, and replacement costs from our formula allocation and carry-over reserves.

Instructional Classrooms

We have six IT classrooms with LAITS consoles and four seminar/conference rooms with stand alone LAITS projection and sound systems that share a mobile media console. Six of the classrooms are maintained with an annual service contract with LAITS. In consultation with LAITS, we perform maintenance, upgrade, and replacement costs on all the rooms from our formula allocation and carry-over reserves.

Computer Classroom

We have a 30 workstation computer classroom with a LAITS console. We maintain a three year 1/3 replacement schedule for workstations and annual budget for software.

Learning Resource Center

We have a 22 workstation resource lab and AV studio. We recycle replacement workstations from the computer classroom as needed and maintain an annual budget for software. We also provide laptops and AV equipment for checkout use to faculty and students from ITAC funds.

Staffing

The School has two full-time professional technical staff responsible for all network administration, Web resources, training, and technical support. In addition, students receive some support from TA's working in the LRC. ITAC partially funds one of the full-time professional technical staff positions. The School recognizes the need for more support staff, but our formula allocation is not sufficient to support recurrent funding for permanent staff.

Infrastructure

Our building has complete wired/wireless coverage. The network architecture was upgraded to 10/100 Mbps and we have a fiber link to the NOC. However, some of our internal wiring is CAT 3 and will need to be replaced in the future. We have installed wireless throughout the whole building. We continue to provide network access for Central Duplicating and connections for the University Child Care Center, both located in our building. The School has several dedicated servers. Internally they provide cross-platform file sharing, networked printer access, manage the IT classroom, and provide utility, diagnostic and installation software. Externally they provide Internet services, especially database applications with drop-box information request, on-line surveys, and search and retrieval of school archives and administrative forms.

Our classroom infrastructure is almost complete. We have seven classrooms with LAITS consoles. One is a 30 workstation computer classroom. Four additional seminar/conference rooms are equipped with basic sound and video projection systems and share a mobile cart with document camera, VHS/DVD player, laptop connections, and touch screen management. The School does not currently have a videoconferencing system, but will need to implement a fixed system in conjunction with our future dual degree program plans. The School also has a large capacity auditorium that is used for classes, presentations, conferences, and theater productions. The Utopia Theater is used by many other departments on campus in addition to the School of Social Work. It does not have any presentation technology and would require a complete physical renovation before it can be employed as a dual use IT and theatre production auditorium.

The LRC computer laboratory is managed as an open facility, not limited to social work students. The lab is used by students, TA's, AI's, GRA's, and faculty. The computer lab is filled to capacity with 22 workstations,. The LRC has tape editing equipment an AV workstation, a color scanner, digital camera, and CD/DVD burner in a AV studio, as well as equipment to loan on request. The LRC has a vast collection of video tapes and recordings that need to be digitally preserved and cataloged.

Current and Proposed Funding Sources

Our annual ITAC allocation is our primary source of IT funds. It is used to maintain our computer lab, IT classrooms, and partially pay for professional staff to oversee the network and overall technology operations. Prior to flat-fee tuition, students paid an IT fee and an LRC fee. In addition to ITAC, activity funds are drawn from tuition and used for permanent support staff positions and

TA's. These positions provide support for curricula development, student projects, IT classrooms, LRC computer lab, Web resources, and network administration. Other support funds for staff came from School accounts. The school continues to seek outside funds especially for renovations to the Utopia Theatre. We also rely heavily on ITS and DIIA services and support.

Best Practices

The School has implemented several "best practices" in recent years. Below are four with the greatest impact.

Service Contracts

We contract with LAITS to provide classroom support for consoles. They operate their help line for faculty and furnish personnel for daily pre-class checks of the console equipment. We pay them an annual fee for the service. We hope that ITS can begin providing services at reasonable cost for a variety of IT functions from backup to desktop support.

Wireless

The implementation of wireless has improved student access while reducing overall costs. With building wide implementation we are able to deliver full access, encourage student laptop purchase and incorporate handhelds and PDA's into our instruction. At the same time we can reduce our need for additional wiring, reduce support and maintenance of joint use workstations, and cut back on lifecycle replacement of workstations. A recent survey showed that student ownership and use of laptops has not reached a point where we can justify laptop requirements nor change joint use facilities into a "learning space" design, but that is our future goal.

Support with GA's

The School is at a disadvantage by not being able to provide annual funding for increased staff support. Our formula allocation is not sufficient to hire additional permanent staff nor is a one-time allocation regular enough to support the recurring cost of permanent positions. With increased use of technology in the classrooms, security issues, and demand for Web materials our staff resources are exhausted with day-to-day support and administration. The School has only two full-time professional technical staff responsible for all network administration, Web resources, training, technical support, IT classrooms, the LRC computer lab, student support, and faculty IT projects related to curriculum development. The School strongly supports the use of GA's to fill gaps in staff support. We encourage faculty to request GA's and have used them to provide student support and coverage in the LRC. We offer GA positions as a financial assistance incentive in recruiting new students. Students with GA positions benefit greatly from both the applied learning environment and the financial assistance.

Utilization of University Resources

As a small School we recognize the significant advantage we gain by working in partnership with other departments, schools, and programs on campus. For example, we contract with LAITS for daily checks of our classroom consoles, ITS for print services in our student lab, and the Business School for consultation and setup for our computer classroom and student lab workstations. We use the ITS helpdesk for most first response faculty and staff support. Faculty have developed materials with DIIA consulting and Fast-Tex programs. These partnerships and University-wide support

initiatives significantly reduce our operating costs and greatly enhance the pool of shared knowledge utilized by the entire University.

Use of Previous Allocations

All ITAC expenditures this year were consistent with our vision plan in accordance with our lifecycle, maintenance and support recurring costs. Although we received a one-time project allocation, we did not receive sufficient funds to proceed in full with our priority projects. Both projects were contingent on additional funds to supplement our ITAC allocation. One was restoration of our 230 seat Utopia Theatre. We were seeking outside funds and a special project ITAC allocation for renovations, a LAITS implementation of auditorium technology, lighting, and sound. The second project was to implement classroom and studio equipment to join a shared infrastructure for production and broadcast of instructional material. We submitted a joint request with several other schools to build the shared infrastructure. The joint proposal was unfunded.

As we have done in the past, we decided to reserve most of our allocation this year to combine with our 2007-2008 allocation and put toward full implementation of main projects. We continue to seek renovation funds for the theatre and will proceed with the necessary improvements to our building as funds become available.

Needs and Proposed Use of Funds

Classroom Technology System for Auditorium \$250,000

We view the Utopia Theatre as an untapped resource for the University with its old style theatrical charm, campus location and ample evening parking. It is a 230 seat auditorium that is used for classes, presentations, conferences, and theater productions. The Utopia Theatre is used by many other departments on campus in addition to the School of Social Work. In its current state it does not have any presentation technology and has the look and feel of an old junior high auditorium. We use it regularly for classes for our growing program. Our other classrooms only hold 42 or less students. Any of our larger classes, including most of the crosslisted ones, are held in Utopia. We will be severely constrained in our ability to provide signature and flag requirement courses under the new core curriculum unless we have the auditorium facility as a classroom.

We will continue to seek funds, estimated at 1.5 million, to renovate and preserve this wonderful historic site. In the meantime, we require installation of a permanent LAITS auditorium configuration, lighting, sound and substantial physical improvements to convert the Utopia Theatre into a state-of-the-art instructional and small conference facility. We recently received a generous grant from the COOP to make improvements to the stage area and have held in reserve ITAC funds from previous allocations to spend toward installation of a LAITS console system. We need additional funds we can make lighting and other physical improvements, including accessibility, that would make this a fully functional teaching/conference facility. With our reserve and money from the COOP, we are in a prime position move ahead and build a state-of-the-art teaching and stage facility on the south side of campus. Without additional funds, we can put a console and drop screens on stage, but that hardly makes it a good teaching facility. After renovations we will continue to share this facility with the rest of campus.

Curricula Development and Distribution**\$80,000**

The School recognizes that even with Blackboard and ITS support, that the time and expertise involved in developing curricula materials and exploring new technologies is often beyond the scope of our faculty. Most faculty are already involved in research, community, and practice endeavors outside of their normal teaching load. Therefore, we are requesting funding for faculty release time, TA support, and equipment to develop Web-based instructional materials, promote better use of technology classrooms, and explore new ways of integrating technology in the field of social work. In the past we effectively used an AI position to assist faculty in getting on Blackboard. Now we need more substantial support to examine and overhaul our entire curricula delivery to match technology classroom potential and Web-based directions. This proposal is to create a team of faculty, staff, and teaching assistants to work with faculty and program directors, DIIA, ITS, other colleges etc. to develop models for teaching effectiveness, identify curricula for integration and Web-based delivery, assist faculty in producing content, and pilot new technologies such as podcasting and videoconferencing.

Production Studio and Capture/Web-Cast Equipment**\$30,000**

Our students spend a significant part of their education in field placement internships and there is a growing number of students choosing placements outside of Austin, the state, and even the US. We need to communicate with them individually and bring them into the classroom environment from afar. Our students in the classroom do a lot of role playing exercises and practice counseling and interview skills. The capability to record and broadcast these sessions will significantly impact learning. We have regular trainings, workshops, conferences, seminars, presentations, etc. conducted by faculty, students, and community experts. We also have a vast library of tapes and recordings and must be restored and preserved. We need the resources to capture, produce, archive, and broadcast our activities and instructional materials. Our facility has a 44 seat classroom located above a small soundproof studio with accompanying control room .

Our proposal is to create a production studio for taping, video and DVD editing; to equip the classroom and soundproof studio with camera and sound collection systems; and to provide resources for restoration and archive of our media collection. In addition to a one-time purchase of equipment, we seek recurring funding for support staff. We will use qualified GA's from our school and others to assist with the AV equipment, support students in the lab, help faculty develop curricula and produce and maintain our digital assets collection. Future considerations are to make materials in our digital archive available to public school teachers and counselors through the Web.

Lifecycle Funding for IT Classrooms, LRC, and Network and Staff Support **\$100,000**

This proposal is for recurring funding to maintain our network, IT classrooms, computer facilities and additional staff support so that faculty and students can teach and learn in a first class environment. We operate on a 1/3 annual replacement lifecycle for classroom and lab workstations. We also partially fund a staff position to oversee and maintain our IT resources. This year we will have the additional burden of implementing network and support services to meet BPM-53 requirements and providing student assistance in the LRC lab, formerly funded with student fees.