



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Educating for Change

The School of Social Work

Information Technology Vision Plan

Academic Year 2008 - 2009

November 30, 2007

The University of Texas at Austin

School of Social Work

2008 - 2009 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. We are still building our infrastructure with the addition of our 230 seat auditorium. It is difficult to show innovation when we are still building and improving our basic infrastructure. However, each addition of technology to our infrastructure opens new doors to teaching and learning. Our innovation is that we continue to look toward the future in planning and desire, even though implementation is slow and incremental. This year's proposal is for infrastructure upgrades to building wiring and existing classroom technology, additional support staff, renovations of the LRC and computer classroom, purchase of videoconferencing equipment, and curricula enhancements and faculty training that takes advantage of classroom technology.

Infrastructure

Lifecycle Funding for IT Classrooms, LRC, Network and Staff Support **\$100,000**
Lifecycle replacement funding and upgrade for equipment and recurring funds for software licenses, ITS consulting, service contracts, and support personnel.

One-time Projects

Replacement of Classroom Console Computers and Audio Upgrade **\$15,000**
Upgrade CPU's in consoles to Intel-based Macs and add audio capture equipment.

Curricula Development and Teaching Effectiveness **\$50,000**
Funding for faculty and TA/GA support to develop Web-based instructional materials, promote better use of technology classrooms, and pilot new ways of integrating technology into the discipline of social work.

Learning Resource Center and Computer Classroom Renovations **\$80,000**
Physical renovation of LRC computer lab and computer classroom into 'learning space', purchase of loaner laptops, and helpdesk support with TA/GA's positions.

Innovative Support of Student Learning

Videoconferencing Equipment **\$35,000**
The purchase of one fixed video conference system and one portable system to expand our classrooms beyond physical limitations and serve our students in remote locations.

Total Request **\$280,000**

In addition to our ITAC request, we included in Appendix I at the end of the document information about our theatre renovation project. We have a 230 seat theatre that we are installing a LAITS console, improving the stage area, and making the seats and walkways accessible. The implementation of classroom technology makes it extremely useful to us. We want to bring this to

the attention of the ITAC committee in keeping with the emphasis on innovation. We think the theatre can serve a wider audience on campus. With additional renovations, The University could create a dual purpose classroom and performance theatre on the south side of campus for use by the entire UT community.

Introduction

We view the Vision Plan as our working document, mapping out directions and expenditures for the coming years. We realize that our annual 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 making incremental payments, when possible, and saving money in reserve until we have enough to fully fund projects.

The School of Social Work has made great strides building a technology infrastructure geared toward network connectivity and academic instruction in the classroom. We recognized the value of instructional technology and accepted the challenge of modernizing and improving our building. 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 equipment, while maintaining a budget to support our growing resources. 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. With much of our technology funds held in reserve each year, we struggle to support the innovation and special projects needed to meet today's challenges in an ephemeral technological environment. With the level of IT funds available to us each year, our commitment to building a technology infrastructure is innovative, as each incremental improvement we are able to implement creates brand new avenues for learning.

When we first arrived in our building we started by creating an Ethernet network architecture, a student computer lab, and an instructional classroom with 30 workstations. Then we moved on to other classrooms, installing LAITS consoles in classrooms. Next we added a LAITS console in our IT classroom and projection systems in three conference rooms and one seminar room that share VCR/DVD/Doc camera on a mobile 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. Now all seven classrooms and four seminar/conference rooms have consoles or basic projection systems. Using our ITAC allocation, our only source of IT funds, it has taken us 13 years to get this far.

Our initial goal to build a classroom infrastructure has been almost achieved. We can complete our physical infrastructure with the technology and renovations to turn a 230 seat 'junior high' auditorium into a state-of-the-art instructional teaching facility. However, this phase has been the most expensive. Utopia requires substantial renovations to make it both accessible and a viable teaching facility. Committed to completing our classroom infrastructure, we have saved most of our ITAC money for several years to afford LAITS technology in the auditorium. We have begun the initial planning and work is expected to be completed by fall 2008.

As we struggle to build a rudimentary teaching infrastructure, instructional technology marches on. Our initial wiring and teaching consoles are out-of-date. New teaching methods challenge us to create better learning spaces and 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

Vision: *"To build an instructional technology infrastructure of network, classrooms, and resources to furnish our students and faculty with a first class teaching/learning environment."*

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 and core values direct us to move beyond the classroom:

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."*

Core Value #4: *"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.."*

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 engagement and 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 several years in reserve to fully fund improvements. This hampers our ability for futuristic 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. Our IT expenses continue to rise with the complexity and security implications of each new implementation or University policy. We are increasingly in need of additional recurring funds for IT consultants, secure disk storage, service agreements, network services, etc.

IT Programs

ITAC funds are used to support the following areas.

Network Infrastructure

We have 100MB Ethernet capacity, but 95% of the building is only 10MB because of older wiring that need to be replaced. There is full wireless coverage throughout the building. In consultation with ITS, we maintain our network maintenance, upgrade, and replacement costs with a combination of School and ITAC funds.

Classrooms

We have seven IT classrooms and four seminar/conference rooms. All seven classrooms have LAITS consoles. One is a computer classroom with 30 student workstations. The seminar rooms have projection and sound systems and share VCR/DVD/Doc camera on a mobile cart. Six of the classrooms are maintained with an annual service contract with LAITS. The computer classroom has a three year 1/3 replacement schedule for workstations and annual budget for software. Replaced computers are recycled to the LRC computer lab and used by TA/GA's and adjunct faculty. We perform maintenance, upgrade, and replacement costs on all the rooms from ITAC funds.

PHD Office

We have four joint use student workstations in our Ph.D. office. These were new purchases this year from ITAC funds.

Learning Resource Center

The LRC has a 22 workstation resource lab, a common area, and four small studios that serve our population of approximately 700 students. We recycle replacement workstations from the computer classroom with an annual budget for software. We have four laptops, a digital camcorder, and a digital camera for checkout use to faculty and students from ITAC funds. The library collection, student workers, and additional AV equipment comes from LRC 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 GA's working in the LRC. ITAC partially funds one of the full-time professional technical staff positions.

Infrastructure

Although we have Ethernet throughout the building, only 5% of the connections are 100MB. The rest are 10MB and in most cases will require new wire pulls to upgrade. We have full wireless coverage in the building and a fiber link to the NOC. 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 a few dedicated servers. Internally they provide category III data file sharing, networked printer access, manage the IT classroom, and provide utility, diagnostic and installation software. Externally they provide limited Internet services such as drop-box information requests and surveys.

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 teleconferencing system. Our large capacity auditorium 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. It does not have any built in technology resources. We are in the process of renovating the theatre.

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, GA'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, and a digital camera. 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. Last year we received a formula allocation of \$64,807 and a one-time allocation of \$39,121. ITAC funds our network, computer lab, IT classrooms, Ph.D. office, and partially pays for one professional FTE to oversee the network and overall technology operations. In addition to ITAC, activity funds are drawn from tuition and used for one FTE support staff position and TA/GA's. These positions provide support for curricula development, student projects, IT classrooms, and the LRC computer lab. Other support funds for staff come 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 network to desktop support.

Wireless

The implementation of wireless has improved student access while reducing overall costs. We deliver full access throughout the building. In the future, as more students own laptops, we hope to reduce our need for new wiring, reduce support and maintenance of joint use workstations, and cut back on lifecycle replacement of workstations.

Support with TA/GA's

The School is at a disadvantage by not being able to provide annual funding for increased staff support. Our ITAC allocation has not been sufficient to hire additional staff nor 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 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 TA/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 these positions as a financial assistance incentives 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 professional 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 Academic Year Allocations

Infrastructure

All ITAC expenditures this year were consistent with our vision plan in accordance with our lifecycle, maintenance and recurring support costs. We replaced 1/3 of the workstations in the computer classroom and recycled them into the LRC computer lab. We added four workstations to our Ph.D. office.

With this year's ITAC allocation, reserves saved from previous allocations, and outside funds we were finally able to move ahead with the implementation of IT technology in our 230 seat Utopia Theatre. We received a University Co-op grant to make improvements to the stage area along with

University funds to make the seating and walkways accessible, which had been a major impediment. We are still in the planning stage with University architects, but work is expected to be completed in time for Fall 2008 classes.

One-time Projects

We did not receive sufficient funds to proceed with any other projects. Our second priority project was to install classroom and studio equipment and join a shared University-wide 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 is yet unfunded.

Needs and Proposed Use of Funds

Infrastructure

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

We seek recurring funding at a level that maintains our network, IT classrooms, computer facilities and staff support so that faculty and students can teach and learn in a first class environment.

Although we have Ethernet throughout the building, only 5% of the connections are 100MB. The rest are 10MB. Upgrading will require, in most cases, new wire pulls from the network closet. ITS networking has also recommended that we replace older switches that have passed their warranty period.

Our maintenance and support costs are increasing. ITS has new charges for networking and service and consultant contracts to support and maintain our increasingly complex systems. In addition, we face the burden of implementing network and support services to meet new requirements for category I data security. We also struggle with providing faculty and student support with GA's in the LRC. Operating funds we used for TA/GA's were slashed in the last round of cutbacks. Meanwhile faculty are requesting more hands-on support. In the Faculty Summit Feedback report released by from the Office of the Vice President for Information Technology, classroom support and customer service support were main topics. The School recognizes the need for more support staff, but our formula allocation is not sufficient to support an additional FTE staff position.

One-time Projects

Replacement of Classroom Console Computers and Audio Upgrade \$15,000

The Mac and PC computers in our consoles are several years old. We continue to have trouble with media because they do not support DVD+R, DVD-RW, CD-RW disk formats. They are not fast enough for the latest applications and do not support many compression formats used to deliver Web content. We are currently unable to use Labman and do not match other LAITS desktop configurations on campus, noted as a major problem in the Faculty Summit Feedback report.

Following LAITS recommendations, we would like to replace 6 G4 Macs and 6 PC's with Intel-based Mac Minis. Their dual boot capability, cross-platform software and external media integration, and uniform construction make them the ideal candidate for the consoles. We will be able to use single disk images to match user interface with other LAITS supported classrooms and Labman software for security and access.

In addition to the CPU replacement we would like each classroom to have equipment to capture audio. Faculty can record their lectures to review, make learning modules, and post for students. Students would benefit greatly from the ability to replay a lecture. This can be done with minimal cost with wireless microphones and the upgraded CPU's.

Curricula Development and Teaching Effectiveness

\$50,000

The School recognizes that even with Blackboard and ITS support, the time and expertise involved in developing curricula materials and exploring new technologies is often difficult to manage for our faculty. Faculty are already involved in research, community, and practice endeavors outside of their normal teaching load. Therefore, we are requesting funding for faculty incentives or buy-out, TA support, and IT consulting 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. The number one complaint by students across campus according to DIIA is that faculty are not adept at using the instructional technology in the classrooms.

Inexpensive methods and applications exist making it possible to record presentations into a downloadable file that can be viewed as many times, by as wide an audience, and in any format as needed. UT's Blackboard, Webspace, and DASE tools support the delivery, accessibility, and security of the files. This proposal is to create a team of faculty, staff, teaching assistants, and consultants to work together. First they will examine and develop models for teaching effectiveness and identify curricula for integration and Web-based delivery. Second they will train and assist faculty in effective use of instructional technology in the classroom and producing content for the Web.

Learning Resource Center and Computer Classroom Renovations

\$80,000

Our LRC computer lab and computer classroom are relics of an earlier pedagogy. The computer lab has 22 workstations lined up side by side on a long row of fixed tables. The computer classroom has 30 workstations arranged on fixed tables facing the front. However, much of our coursework is collaborative, with students working together in small groups. A fluid 'learning space' arrangement in both areas would better support how students learn and interact on projects. The school provided workstations in the past because most students did not have them. That is no longer the case, most students have laptops or home computers. They do not need to find a workstation on campus to check email, they have smart phones. Across campus departments are removing their fixed labs in favor of learning spaces.

We want to refurnish our lab and computer classroom to make them more useful and inviting to students, encourage them to bring laptops, and promote collaboration and communication. We will continue to provide a minimum of fixed workstations based on need and purchase ten laptops that students can check out to use in this area or classrooms. The LRC has four private studios which are perfect for laptop conferencing with Skype or iChat. Additionally we will fund TA/GA's to increase the level of help coverage in the LRC. They will be trained to provide basic support in the LRC and classrooms.

Initially we will need to spend money for furniture, wiring and laptops. We will need faculty support through incentives and TA/GA's to redesign the method in which statistics courses are taught in the 30 workstation computer classroom. After the initial implementation we will realize substantial savings over time through reduction of life-cycle funding and support of workstations, software costs, insurance, and general maintenance to keep computer labs running.

Innovative Support of Student Learning

Videoconferencing Equipment

\$35,000

We seek funds for one fixed video conference system and one portable system. The fixed system will provide easy connections to our remote research site at Hartland and education partners at Houston and Dallas. The portable system will provide maximum flexibility for use in multiple classrooms and will double as a audio/video capture device for creating learning modules and podcasts. A highly portable solution could be delivered to field locations and integrate remote setting into our classroom activities.

Our students spend a significant part of their education in field internships. A growing number of students are choosing placements outside of Austin, the state, and even the US. While we encourage the growth and educational opportunities afforded by diverse placements, we need to communicate with students in field individually and bring them into the classroom environment from afar. Social work is a profession of communication. We are engaged in the community. A substantial component of our students' learning experience is from guest lecturers brought to the classroom. Additionally, we host regular trainings, workshops, conferences, seminars, etc. conducted by faculty, students, and community experts. Videoconferencing is a natural fit allowing us to collaborate and communicate with colleagues across the world.

A videoconference system expands our horizons and connect us to our community in diverse and more cost effect ways. For example, a system would allow students in our new MSSW-MPH program to "attend" classes that are offered via ITV from the Houston and Dallas campuses of the School of Public Health. Doctoral students would be able to attend monthly project meetings on a number of our CSWR research meetings. These meetings are held remotely, and students cannot currently attend due to budgetary constraints. Videoconferencing would greatly enhance our ability to collaborate with researchers and teachers from other universities and settings. This will increase future research funding and provide research training opportunities for our students.

Appendix I

Opportunity for Theatre Renovations to Utopia

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 well suited for large 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 has the look and feel of an old junior high auditorium. We use it regularly for classes for our growing program.

We recently received a generous grant from the Co-op to make improvements to the stage area and University funds for seating renovations. We have held in reserve ITAC funds from previous allocations to spend toward installation of a LAITS console system and are proceeding with implementation, scheduled to be finished by Fall 2008.

Utopia is already a theatre with great character. With additional funds for lighting, sound, video streaming, etc., the theatre could be more useful than just a basic classroom. With support from ITAC or other sources, The University could create a dual purpose classroom and performance theatre on the south side of campus for use by the entire UT community.