



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

---

*Educating for Change*

The School of Social Work

Information Technology Vision Plan

Academic Year 2009 - 2010

December 5, 2008

The University of Texas at Austin

# School of Social Work

## 2009 - 2010 Information Technology Vision Plan

### Summary of Requests

The School of Social Work's ITAC allocation is the primary source of instructional technology funds available to prepare students in our undergraduate and graduate programs for the profession of social work. Our past efforts have focused on the basics: creating a network and building and supporting smart classrooms and student lab facilities. With the addition of our auditorium this year our basic teaching infrastructure is complete. Now our plan focuses on faculty and student learners, inspiring and enhancing education with the possibilities that technology offers while providing comfortable collaboration and learning spaces. We strive to use our limited resources efficiently to increase teaching effectiveness and technology utilization in instruction. Our plan is to provide infrastructure, tools, and support for instructional innovation, collaboration, and research for our faculty and students.

### One-time Projects

Title (Priority)	Description	Funding	Categories
Network Upgrade to 100 Mbps Ethernet (Priority 1)	Upgrade all building connections to full duplex 100 Mbps Ethernet.  -replace wall inserts -replace patch cords in telecomm closet -replace outdated switch (1) -install rack, cables, switch (2) in new telecomm closet -new cable pulls	\$15,000	N-70% H-25% R-5%
Student Collaboration Spaces	Placement of 2 laptop collaboration spaces and increase the number of power outlets in the student lounge.  -Electrical renovation -Ceiling/Wall renovations -Smart workstations (2)	\$20,000	F-60% R-40%
	Total One-Time	\$35,000	

### Innovative Support of Student Learning

Title (Priority)	Description	Funding	Categories
Ergonomic Seating in Classrooms (Priority 2)	Replace old-style high school desks with ergonomic technology friendly desks.  -replace all desks in 5 smart classrooms SSW 2.112 (44 seats) SSW 2.116 (45 seats) SSW 2.118 (46 seats) SSW 2.122 (46 seats) SSW 2.130 (39 seats)	\$66,000	F-100%

## ***Innovative Support of Student Learning (Cont.)***

<b>Title (Priority)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Categories</b>
Laptop, Video, CRS, and Podcasting Equipment Loaner Program (Priority 3)	Provide laptops, classroom response system, video and audio equipment for faculty and students to check out and use in classrooms and various collaborative workspaces and off-campus.  -Electrical and security renovations to LRC -Laptops (Mac dual-boot) (15) -Portable LCD Projector (3) -32" LCD Monitor (4) -Classroom Response System -Solid-state camcorder (3) -Mobile carts (4) -Microphones and audio mixers -Software -Cables, carrying case, etc. -Increase GA support in LRC	\$80,000	H-65% P-20% S-5% F-5% R-5%
LRC 'Learning Space' Remodel	Renovation of existing LRC computer lab to a multiuse collaborative/technology workspace.	\$45,000	F-60% R-40%
	Total Innovative	\$191,000	
	Total One-time and Innovative	\$226,000	

## **Needs and Proposed Use of Funds**

### ***Infrastructure***

#### **Recurring and Lifecycle Funding for Smart Classrooms, LRC, Network, Service Contracts, and Staff Support \$70,000**

We seek 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. Our annual maintenance and support costs are increasing. As our use of technology grows so do our costs. We have TNS network costs, contract with ITS for many of its services, and have maintenance agreements with LAITS for our smart classrooms. In addition, we face a new load of unfunded mandates implementing network and support services to meet ISO and University policies for technology security, administration and management.

### ***One-time Projects***

#### **Network Upgrade to 100 Mbps Ethernet (Priority 1) \$15,000**

Although we have Ethernet throughout the building, only 5% of the connections are 100 Mbps Ethernet. The rest are 10 Mbps. This severely limits our ability to move data across the network, share files, backup data, and collaborate with even basic conferencing software. Upgrading will require replacement of wall inserts, patch cords, and installation of a rack, cables, and 2 switches in

a new telecomm closet. Additionally we will have to pull new cable. TNS has also recommended that we replace old switches that have passed their warranty period.

### **Student Collaboration Spaces**

**\$20,000**

More and more of our students are using laptops and smart phones. We encourage their use to enhance learning and retention. The number one issue on many student surveys is the lack of physical places to charge their equipment. We propose increasing electrical outlets and creating two workspaces for students in our student lounge. Two smart desks in the lounge will allow students to work collaboratively and comfortably while recharging batteries in a relaxed setting.

### ***Innovative Support of Student Learning***

#### **Ergonomic Seating in Classrooms (Priority 2)**

**\$66,000**

While the equipment available for faculty in our smart classrooms is consistent with all LAITS classrooms across campus, the dated seating in rooms SSW 2.112, SSW 2.116, SSW 2.118, SSW 2.122, SSW 2.130 is an ergonomic nightmare. Students are forced to sit in high school style desks that are ill suited to adult bodies and one hour lectures. We encourage students to bring laptops to class, however, the desks are unsafe for supporting a laptop and their size makes the experience akin to using a laptop on an airplane. Additionally, our recruitment of new students may be disadvantaged as they sit in information meetings and imagine 2 to 4 years of contorted discomfort. Dictated by our curricula, we will select a combination of tables, chairs and desks that offer maximum flexibility and ergonomic comfort while maintaining accessibility and capacity.

#### **Laptop, Video, CRS, and Podcasting Equipment Loaner Program (Priority 3)      \$80,000**

We propose to purchase laptops, classroom response system, video/audio recording and editing hardware and software, and LCD monitors and projectors that can be packaged as multipurpose 'communication toolkits' with maximum flexibility and portability. Additionally we will fund GA's to increase the level of help coverage in the LRC. They will be trained to provide basic support and manage equipment check in and out.

The move toward the use of laptops and wireless networking provides greater flexibility of access to instructional technology and lowers the costs of equipping, maintaining, and staffing computer lab facilities. The LAITS consoles do not always support all faculty needs and laptops are a convenient way for them to pretest classroom presentations. Several faculty have requested the use of classroom response systems, which we have borrowed from DIIA. We would like to purchase our own systems that can easily integrate with laptops. Student like CRS because of the real time feedback to content, but also because of the anonymity of responding to sensitive questions.

With the creation of new collaboration spaces, better classroom desks, and a redesigned LRC, students will have more opportunities to use laptop technology for learning, communication, and collaboration. The School has also piloted the use of laptop videoconferencing to allow students in field settings at great distances to remotely participate in courses and group projects. The need for this type of low tech, low cost, low bandwidth videoconferencing will expand as local field settings continue to shrink and our placements across the state, country, and world expand.

Another goal the School is working toward, is replacing all of our VHS analog equipment with digital. Students practice their professional skills on camera in the classroom, field and three LRC

studios. We need to join the digital age with all of its technology advantages and equip students with digital cameras, microphones, and editing software and hardware to produce materials and then provide them the means to share their media online. Some of the technology we will be piloting in one classroom this spring with ITAC funding for last year's joint proposal: Automated Instructional Video, Podcasting and Blogging. As faculty experiment and understand the advantages of capturing and posting classroom content on the Web, we expect demand for podcasting to increase. We want to be proactive by creating additional mobile podcasting kits to expand on our pilot.

We envision these resources packaged and available for a wide range of uses to faculty and students to check out and use with assistance from our Learning Resource Center. For example, a faculty member, that needs specialized software in the classroom, needs a classroom response system, or wants to record his/her class, can checkout a laptop with additional equipment, receive instruction on its use, and use it for a whole semester. Students can check out equipment for videoconferencing, collaborative work, or practice recording in classrooms, LRC studios, collaboration spaces, or in field placements.

**Learning Resource Center 'Learning Space' Remodel \$45,000**

Our LRC computer lab is a relic of an earlier era. The computer lab has 22 workstations lined up side by side on a long row of fixed tables. However, much of our coursework is collaborative, with students working together in small groups. A fluid 'learning space' arrangement 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, home computers, and smart phones. Across campus departments are removing their fixed labs in favor of learning spaces.

We want to furnish our lab to make it 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 provide checkout equipment (see Equipment Loaner Program above) for student use. 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 the computer lab running.

## **Overview of Current IT Programs and Infrastructure**

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

The School of Social Work has made great strides building a technology infrastructure of smart classrooms. However, we have not been able to do much in support of innovative projects. With high implementation costs and planning for recurrent maintenance and support, we are constrained by the relative size of our IT budget. Our ITAC allocation is our primary source of technology funds available to the School and it has been easily exhausted with facility improvements and recurring costs. Thus, we are increasingly reliant on ITS services and collaborative projects and resource sharing with other departments to provide innovation and special projects. 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 low cost central

IT resources such as DIIA and ITS software purchasing, network and security support, and help desk training and support. We will continue to partner in joint proposals with other departments to efficiently share resources and raise our overall level of innovation.

As we struggled to build an infrastructure, instructional technology marched on. New teaching methods challenge us to create better learning spaces and expand our "facility" beyond bricks and mortar. We are challenged from within by demands for curricula delivered outside the traditional pedagogy and an expanding field program in remote locations. We are challenged from outside by our community: some recently ravaged by natural disaster, others victims of cuts to travel and professional development budgets, hungry for access, collaboration, and expertise. 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 is consistent with our IT goals:

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

## ***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.

## ***IT Organization***

The School has a Technology Committee with members drawn from faculty and staff representing various departments in the School and Center for Social Work Research. This is a newly revived committee and structured for mostly information gathering and sharing. The committee meets monthly and is chaired by the CFO. Policies and priorities are set by the Dean and CFO in consultation with IT staff.

## ***Infrastructure***

ITAC funds are used to support the following areas.

### Network Infrastructure

We have 100 Mbps Ethernet capacity, but 95% of the building is only 10 Mbps. 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, one auditorium, and four seminar/conference rooms. Six classrooms and the auditorium have LAITS consoles and are maintained with an annual service contract with LAITS. The seminar rooms have projection and sound systems and three share a VCR/DVD/Doc camera on a mobile cart. Our seventh classroom is a computer classroom with 30 student workstations. 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 GA's and adjunct faculty. We perform maintenance, upgrade, and replacement costs on all the rooms except the computer classroom with ITAC funds.

### PHD Office

We have four joint use student workstations in our Ph.D. office. These were purchased and maintained with 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. The LRC computer laboratory is managed as an open facility, not limited to social work 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.

## ***Current and Proposed Funding Sources***

Our annual ITAC allocation is our primary source of IT funds. Last year we received a formula allocation of \$58,543 and a one-time allocation of \$36,500. 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, GA's. These positions provide support for curricula development, student projects, IT classrooms, and the LRC computer lab. Most of the equipment and software expenditures for our 30 workstation computer lab come from this activity fund. Other support funds come from School accounts. 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.

### 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 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 GA's to fill gaps in staff support. GA's have been used 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-Text 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**

All ITAC expenditures this year were consistent with our vision plan. We received a formula allocation of \$58,543 and a one-time allocation of \$36,500 added to our formula allocation.

### ***Infrastructure***

We spent \$48,000 from ITAC on recurring infrastructure costs: lifecycle, insurance, staffing, maintenance, support, and service. With this year's ITAC allocation, reserves saved from previous allocations, and outside funds we were finally able to fully fund implementation of smart classroom technology in our 230 seat Utopia Theatre. This has been a one-time project on our vision plan for 5 years. We spent \$85,000 from ITAC funds. 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. The auditorium was open for classes this fall.

### ***One-time Projects***

We requested on-time project funds to upgrade our six existing LAITS consoles and projectors to be consistent with other consoles across campus. We fully funded the upgrades spending \$24,000 from ITAC. We did not have sufficient funds to proceed with any other projects.