2007 NEOSA CIO of the Year Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to complete our CIO of the Year Questionnaire. There are eight questions covering areas such as information technology (IT) strategy, management philosophy and emerging technologies, etc.

We have provided two (2) formats to complete the questionnaire this year: the online version below and a .pdf version that can be downloaded here.

If you complete the online version, simply click "submit" at the bottom of the page once you are finished. Your completed questionnaire will be forwarded to NEOSA staff.

If you elect to use the .pdf version, you can email it to us directly from the .pdf form itself. Simply save the form to your computer, complete it, and click "Submit by Email" and your data will be sent directly to us.

Please note there is no character or word limit in either the online questionnaire or the .pdf version; therefore, please provide as complete an answer as possible.

All responses will be reviewed by a panel of judges to determine the winner in each category—Large Company, Small Company, Large Non-Profit Organization and Small Non-Profit Organization.

Winners will be recognized at the 2007 CIO Symposium on Wednesday November 14 at Corporate College East.

Thanks again for your participation. We're looking forward to recognizing the outstanding IT talent in Northeast Ohio!

1.) What are the strategic objectives for your organization's information systems?

The University's number strategic objective is student success. Enabling student success will continue to be the hallmark of The University of Akron (UA). We recognize, importantly, that students are the responsibility of all of us at the University, not just of those in our Admissions Office or of faculty in our classrooms. Moreover, we recognize that in today's knowledge economy students must be technologically competent and that the University must employ only the best management information systems. Thus, as a point of comparative advantage, we are leaders in information technology.

In addition, UA is committed to outreach activities which will result in cultural enhancement, community well being and economic development in NE Ohio and statewide.

To support these University objectives Information Technology Services (ITS) has identified the following strategic objectives engaged leadership, enabling infrastructure, seamless and secure access, empowered university community, collaborative environment and engaged outreach.

Engaged Leadership

Enhance our information technology governance model to provide a clear framework for ongoing dialogue, collaboration, and agile decision-making within UA colleges, business units and external entities (i.e. State Board of Regents) to leverage current and future opportunities.
Enabling Infrastructure
Enhance our university-wide IT infrastructure of people, processes, policies, and technologies to make it more accessible, dependable, secure, flexible, and scalable to meet our teaching, learning, research, organizational, and outreach needs.

Seamless and Secure Access
Enhance our IT infrastructure to provide the University and authorized external communities with secure, seamless, personalized, and timely access to information, services, and support at any time from any place.

Empowered University Community
Enhance both the traditional and virtual University communities to enable all to benefit from and contribute to the continuing evolution of teaching, learning, research, organizational, and outreach effectiveness at UA.

Collaborative Environment
Enhance the University’s infrastructure to be more user-centric and cooperative, featuring open and informative learning, shared knowledge and information, coordinated communication, and decision making.

Engaged Outreach
ITS will openly share the knowledge we’ve gained as technology leaders in higher education with any interested external party. Additionally, UA will take a lead in external initiatives like shared services (sharing technology and functional units across universities) and city-wide network design and implementation.

To achieve these objectives, we have identified the following strategic initiatives for this year (fiscal 2008).

- Governance and Communications – implement formal governance, portfolio and project management

- Network Upgrade – core, distribution, edge, wireless, public access, management and security upgrades. Integrate new residence halls and accommodate new football stadium. Enable voice calls and mobile applications to be run across existing WiFi network.

- Cybersecurity – primarily user training and awareness of issues, practices, ethics and responsibilities

- ERP / Architecture Upgrade – upgrade of Peoplesoft applications to most current version (V9). Replace mainframe with open systems architecture to lower total cost of ownership.

- Data Warehousing – implementation of executive dashboards and balanced scorecards

- eLearning – replace aging online learner infrastructure with new course/learning management system to reach remote students with asynchronous distance learning (like University of Phoenix is doing)
- **Distance Learning to Desktop** – provide a true synchronous (two-way, real-time) learning experience to remote students. Remote students will only need PC, camera, microphone and a broadband connection to participate. This will truly differentiate UA from Phoenix and other online universities.

- **Faculty IT Support** – provide increased training and support to teach faculty how to incorporate technology in teaching (pedagogy)

- **Digitize Critical Assets** – digitally store and preserve UA valuable assets (i.e. book, papers, research documents, etc.)

- **Staff Education and Training** – IT training and career development

- **User IT Support** – enhance support capabilities (i.e. help desk, web site, etc.)

- **Website Redesign** – reorganize and redesign web site to better serve all constituencies: students, faculty, administration/staff and friends of the University.

- **Emergency Management Planning** – campus-wide emergency management planning (post Virginia Tech), including business continuity and disaster recovery planning.

- **Learning Commons** – repurpose the Library to introduce and support the integration of skills in information literacy, technology literacy, writing and math competencies, multimedia development, innovative instructional methodologies, and technology-enabled instruction.

- **Shared Services** – implement a shared services proof-of-concept at Lorain County Community College. We believe strongly that Universities should share backoffice operations, significantly reducing costs, without impacting their respective missions, brands or unique programs.

2.) **How have innovation and creativity been used to strategically enhance the organization’s core business practices?**

UA was the first university in the country to install a wireless network both in- and outdoors earlier this century. For many years the university received as much marketing value from the wireless network as the students did from its use. Over the last two years we have worked diligently to improve wireless coverage and to more broadly deploy loaner laptops to maximize the value received by the students. Today, it’s not uncommon to see large numbers of students around campus engaged in active learning, collaboration and social networking using laptop technology. One of the student critical success factors is active engagement in learning and the University, which this technology has enabled.

We have been working to creatively merge video conferencing and multimedia into one data stream, we call this project distance learning to the desktop. This combined data stream will enable us to deliver a real-time, synchronous learning experience to any PC with a low capacity (>364K) broadband connection, anywhere in the world. We expect this technology to provide an incremental review stream by enabling UA to reach the underserved adult learner market that requires such convenience.
Leveraging the technology infrastructure in place we’ve been able to implement a culture of continuous improvement at UA. Several people have been trained on CQI and Lean Six Sigma. Using the technology and the improvement methods has resulted in several business processes (i.e. new hire process, the student employment process, etc.) being improved.

We are leveraging UA’s ERP knowledge and my private sector acquisition and assimilation experience to provide a backoffice shared services vision, plan and proof case for the Board of Regents, Ohio’s Governor and the legislators in Columbus. You have heard and will hear more about the benefits of consolidation in higher education and K-12.

3.) What do you consider your greatest accomplishment in your position, and why?

At the University I am most proud of the level of engagement I’ve been able to achieve both in and outside the University. At the University I’ve worked hard to develop relationships with UA’s senior leaders, Deans, Department Chairs, Faculty, Students and the IT Team. I’m frequently asked to participate on committees, which is an indication that I’ve been accepted into the University and my thoughts are appreciated and valued. Some of the more important committees I’m involved with are University Council (I am the only VP working with the Faculty to develop a post-unionization shared governance model for the university), University-wide Budget Committee, Operation Advisory Committee, Student Fees Committee, Stadium Committee, Student Housing Committee, President’s Innovation Committee, Space Planning Committee, Student Success Committee, Long-term Planning Committee and others.

In IT, we’ve been working hard to create a culture that’s team and change oriented while being passionate about serving our customers and current technology. The result is our customer satisfaction surveys have shown significant improvement over the last year. We’re also proud to be able to build on the University’s reputation as a technology innovator with our networking, distance learning, and student relationship management initiatives.

Outside the University I’m active with several professional groups and Boards, the City, the local high schools, and my counterparts and leaders from around the State. I have established myself as a leader in many of the initiatives the University is involved in. Most recently, I was the only CIO in NE Ohio higher education to present strategic/aspirational ideas to the Commission (Northeast Ohio Universities Collaboration & Innovation Study Commission) formed by the State legislature to make recommendations to promote greater access and affordability for students and an overall improved quality of higher education in Northeast Ohio.

4.) How do you quantify the benefits of technology investments to your organization? Please provide specific measures, return on investment (ROI) percentages or other objective measures used to quantify technology ROI.

Projects are prioritized based on the following criteria: Regulatory Compliance, Alignment to Strategy, Operational Urgency, Political/Competitive Impact, Ease of Implementation and Payback. The criteria are weighted, each project scored and a Value Rating calculated. Projects are then completed in the order of their respective Value rating.
Initially Payback had a low weighting factor but we’re working with the University Committee to place more emphasis on ROI. Historically higher education has not placed a significant emphasis on cost and benefit ratios but this is changing as more people from industry go to work in the education industry.

5.) How has your organization used emerging technology to create business value?

Information Technology Services (ITS) is one of the key catalysts for innovations and initiatives that make UA one of the top technology schools in Ohio and the nation. Through the implementation of revolutionary and evolutionary technologies, we have helped the University radically transform the face of higher education. From wireless computers, and enterprise software to technology-based distance learning, we have and will continue to reshape our learning landscape. One example, technology that enables synchronous learning to be delivered directly to any desktop is in final stages of testing. Once testing is completed, UA will be able to reach that largest underserved market in the world, the busy adult student. Utilizing this technology, adult learners will be able to actively participate in classrooms from a distance. This new technology goes well beyond the asynchronous learning (i.e. WebEx, Net Meeting, etc.) we’re all familiar with. With a camera and a microphone students will be able to see and interact with the instructors, other students and all the multi-media materials available regardless of their location.

6.) What are the short-term (this year) and long-term (three years) IT goals for your organization?

Our goal this year is to make as much progress as possible on the strategic initiatives listed above. In addition, we will continue to transition the culture in IT to be more change and service centric.

Over the next three years we will build the infrastructure and the management processes required to support the shared service initiative below. Distance learning to the desktop will be broadly deployed. Working with the Akron Public Schools we will build the School of Tomorrow onto the Inventor’s Hall of Fame. And, lastly and most importantly we will develop technology-based tools to more intimately engage with students to keep them at UA through degree completion and to cause them to come back to UA for their life long learning needs.

7.) Briefly describe the organizational structure of your IT team. Please describe 2-3 of the team’s key accomplishments in the last twelve months? How are outstanding team efforts recognized?

We currently have 140 full time and 100 students working in IT at The University of Akron. My goal over time is to swap the ratio to give more of our students access to more experiential learning opportunities. I currently have 7 direct reports focused on operations, applications, networking, security, special projects, project management and the IT front office.

We have become a team which is the most significant accomplishment. Coming from the private sector created credibility and understanding gaps that I’ve been able to overcome. My university engagement style has led my team to adjust their styles and improve relationships
university-wide. Technologically, A major Peoplesoft finance upgrade was completed and our distance learning team figured out a way to deliver synchronous DL to the desktop.

ITS has division-wide meetings to recognize success and share visions and plans. The University's senior leadership team and State leaders have acknowledged UA's thought leadership in IT, which has been rewarding for our entire team.

8.) Please describe your efforts and/or results with regards to community development or community service related to the I.T. Industry.

We believe in the future, institutions of higher education will no longer buy massive servers to run centralized business applications or enterprise learning management solutions. Instead they will outsource to less expensive, state or regionally coordinated or privately owned service centers. Properly developed, a business model where schools share the technology and backoffice services enabled by these new, centralized operations will bring about new levels of effectiveness and cost efficiencies. UA and Lorain County Community College (LCCC) are engaged in a collaborative project to validate that business processes can be standardized and applications can be made to support multiple institutions from a central location. The proposed UA-LCCC project will obtain professional services to assist in crafting a well researched governance model and service level agreements that will be reusable and transferable throughout the state. In addition, a well documented project and resource plan will be developed between the organizations to ensure the pilot project expectations are understood and aligned with the actual outcome. We are challenging our individual institutions to create and implement a different and innovative backoffice services business model that will eventually be scalable in our region and a model for the state. Many states are sharing technology but we are not aware of any state that has combined backoffice functions (i.e. HR, payroll, purchasing, etc.) across multiple institutions. When we successful, Ohio will be the first and UA will have been the catalyst. The expected savings from a state-wide model, which are significant, would be redirected to the educating our students both traditional age and adults.

As stated above, we are involved in: the construction of a math and science middle school at The Inventors Hall of Fame, the construction and implementation of a city-wide wireless network - including a sustainable business model, several local and state-wide professional organizations and state-wide collaboration and integration initiatives.