

State Center Community College District Information Technology Assessment

Summary Points

CampusWorks Inc's on-site team (Carol Thomas, lead; Dr. Laura Grandgenett; Dr. Nick Laudato; Peter Bosco) represent a combined total of 100+ years of experience in higher education technology leadership and management, academic technology and distance learning, infrastructure and architecture, and ERP implementations and support (including Datatel Colleague).

During our assessment, we:

- met with about 100 individuals at the District Office, Fresno College, Reedley College and Willow International
- visited classrooms and toured facilities at each location
- held one-on-one interviews with nearly all of the technology staff at the District Office, Fresno College and Reedley College
- met with senior leadership at the District Office, Fresno College and Reedley College
- held open forums for faculty, staff and students at Fresno College, Reedley College and Willow International
- held focus groups with administrative and academic users throughout the District.

The community welcomed us warmly, participated energetically, and demonstrated deep commitment to the mission of the institution.

The feedback from the community showed the following as the primary issues with information technology within the State Center Community College District (the ranking is CWI's). A synopsis of our suggestions is also provided.

1. **Resources.** From technology staff we heard there were not enough resources to accomplish their tasks. From the user community we heard that they were reserved in their expectations because they believe there are inadequate resources.

CampusWorks is not convinced that resources are inadequate. We are convinced, however, that the District has no plan for information technology. As a result, it is impossible to determine what resources are required to meet the District's goals.

Individual campus plans exist, but they have no overarching framework within which to measure applicability or success.

2. **Technology Leadership.** Universally District constituents are requesting technology leadership. That leadership is needed to support best practice technology management, ensure proper technology planning, identify and organize resources effectively, and leverage the significant investments that the District has made in technology to date.

CampusWorks finds that CIO-level leadership, and associated support resources, are required by the District.

3. **Network Performance.** Two areas of network performance arose consistently.

First, is the network saturation between the District Office and Reedley College. This problem has rendered many network-based services useless – such as use of the Polycom videoconferencing systems – from Reedley to Fresno City or the District Office.

CampusWorks is not convinced that the network performance on the Reedley College connection is due to an undersized connection, as was suggested by District Office staff. We know that many colleges perform well with that amount of bandwidth. However, we are convinced that at Reedley College additional measures can be taken to manage network traffic. These include (as we discovered on Thursday) segregating the networking classroom from the production network (students should not be learning how to work on a network on the production side of the College's network) and managing traffic generated in the residence halls (particularly since NetFlix has been enabled). Network management practices in higher education are clear on these items and, while they require some investment in hardware and training to implement, will likely address a problem that is currently paralyzing that College.

Second is the unreliable performance of the wireless network, particularly for students.

CampusWorks acknowledges that the District staff is working on a replacement strategy for the wireless network. However, we have not had an opportunity to see any planning documents or analysis to determine adequacy of the approach.

4. **Datatel/Web Advisor.** Many areas of the District are struggling with their use of Datatel. Of particular concern are the challenges for students express about the usability of Web Advisor. They are being encouraged to use Web Advisor, but that environment can be difficult to understand. Staff and faculty are frustrated by Datatel's performance for during peak times. These issues are significant as they impact staff and faculty ability to do their work and student's ability to meet their educational objectives.

CampusWorks recognizes that the District is moving to the SQL environment and in that effort suggests that the environment be tuned to address performance. In addition, a thorough plan of action for reviewing the entire Datatel implementation, performing business process review, and ensuring well understood decision-making is essential.

5. **Technology Governance.** CampusWorks defines technology governance as a well understood and transparent decision-making process for all aspects of technology. We find the existing committee structure lacking in consistency, in large part due to a lack of a plan and associated framework for decision making. This is frustrating to many consumers of technology who are willing to be patient if they know what is coming.

6. **Academic Technology.** Classroom technology varies from very old and outdated equipment in some College classrooms to state of the art at Willow International. A well architected life cycle replacement approach, coupled with faculty driven standards for basic classroom technology will help address this. The District has invested significantly in Blackboard without the benefit of a well-defined asynchronous learning plan.

The absence of comprehensive plans and a well understood decision-making structure, suggests the District may not be spending its limited dollars as wisely as it might.

Faculty, staff, administrators and students are all asking for basic services, not for things that are out of the ordinary or extravagant. In an era when efficiency is essential it is imperative to examine business practices (ie, the magic form) and let technology do what it does best – routine well defined tasks – so that people can provide the service students required.