

Research In Brief

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Fall 2005 Technology Master Plan Task Force Focus Groups

Introduction: Palomar is currently developing a district-wide technology programs and services plan tied to its Master Plan 2022. Through its planning process the College has established the Technology Master Plan Task Force (TMPTF). The goal of this task force is to complete the Technology Plan. Integral to the development of such a plan is input from the faculty, staff, and administrators regarding the current state of technology at Palomar and a vision for the use of technology in the future.

To this end members of the TMPTF conducted 11 focus groups with staff, administrators, and faculty during Spring 2005. Participants in each of the focus groups responded to questions from the following interest areas:

- Use
- Access
- Assessment
- Evaluation
- Training
- Support

Methodology: In an effort to obtain input from a wide and varied sample of employees of all Palomar constituency groups, the focus groups were incorporated into existing regular College meetings (e.g. Planning Council meetings, division meetings, technical support staff meetings). In total, more than 200 faculty, staff, and administrators provided input through their participation in one of the focus groups.

Prior to conducting the focus groups, the TMPTF, working in collaboration with the

Office of Institutional Research & Planning (IR&P), developed and tested a set of questions around each of the areas of interest described earlier. Questions in each area were targeted toward both instruction and non-instructional uses of technology.

One of the TMPTF co-chairs facilitated each focus group. The co-chairs lead participants through each of the interest areas and asked for input on instructional and non-instructional technology at Palomar. A flipchart was used to track responses. Further, TMPTF members served as scribes and all of the focus groups were recorded in tape cassette for transcription.

The following broad definition of technology was developed and presented to participants at the beginning of each focus group session. This definition was also displayed on a flipchart or whiteboard in the focus group room so participants could refer to it at any stage during the group.

“Technology is anything related to electronic devices and associated software that you use or regularly come in contact with during your work here at Palomar. These devices include, but are not limited to computer hardware, computer software, telecommunications devices, audiovisual devices, and other instructional, industrial, or office equipment.”

Key Results

Use

The staff, administrators, and faculty at Palomar reported regularly using in excess of 200 different types of hardware, more than 150 types of software, over 50 types of audio visual equipment, and innumerable components of technology infrastructure. Although not intended as a comprehensive “technology inventory”, this list highlights the breadth and diversity of the instructional and non-instructional technology in daily use at Palomar. It is clear that issues relating to “technology” at Palomar reach far beyond computers on desks and data projectors in classrooms.

Access:

This topic area included questions regarding requesting and implementing new technology and replacing existing technology.

During discussion on this topic area, a theme emerged that there was no clearly understood and followed process for either the acquisition or replacement of technology. Participants suggested that Palomar College needs to plan for the purchase and maintenance of new and replacement technology and build these plans into the budget process.

Assessment of Technology: Teaching and Learning.

There was a strong sense that technology enhances the teaching and learning experience. There was concern for the process by which instructors and students will keep pace with emerging classroom technology. There is no formal process for the systematic evaluation of classroom technology at Palomar College, although there was interest in developing one.

Assessment of New Technology:

Similarly there was no set process followed with regard to the assessment of new or replacement technology for non-instructional uses. Once implemented, no consistent method for evaluating technology emerged.

Training & Support:

Training: Palomar College employees have undertaken and are exposed to a variety of formal and informal technology training provided both internally and externally. Feedback regarding the training provided internally by Professional Development (PD) and Academic Technology (ATG) was very positive. There was a strong desire for more technology training and the funds and time away from work to complete it.

Support: The overall feedback regarding support for technology was positive. There was a great deal of appreciation for all providers of technology support at Palomar. The main issues with regard to support that emerged related to the best use of resources. The fragmentation of technology support between groups such as IS, ATG, AV, and the various lab technicians was raised, as was the strong desire for more timely support, particularly in the area of AV.

Overall Assessment of Technology

The overall feeling from the participants of the focus groups was that technology at Palomar College is inconsistent – in some areas it is excellent and in other areas it is lacking.

Summary and Conclusions:

The need for **planning for technology that is tied to resources** emerged as the overarching theme across of the focus groups. It was clear that there is a desire for better planning and evaluation of, training in, purchasing, maintaining, upgrading, and replacing technology and that these plans need to be backed by funds.

More information? Please contact the Office of Institutional Research and Planning if you have any questions about this or other research and planning issues (Ext. 2360)