Chapter 9
Transform, Interact, Learn, Engage (TILE):
Creating Learning Spaces that Transform Undergraduate Education

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objective of this chapter is to describe and analyze the factors that enabled a new strategic vision and rapid change for course delivery at a large, decentralized research university. The authors outline how the university leadership facilitated collaboration among faculty, staff, and technology specialists to design, implement, and assess the value of special technology-rich learning environments. This case focuses on the following factors: the issue of balancing top-down (administrative) and bottom up (faculty-led) approaches that often characterize campus change; the role that external effects had on the ability to move the campus in the direction of a new type of classroom and teaching; an analysis of the University of Iowa's decision-making structure, which sought a balance between the decentralized structure that characterizes faculty's control over the curriculum and the centralized structure that characterizes decisions about facilities; the importance of a faculty-development program; and the role of assessment in evaluating the initiative.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

The University of Iowa is a public Research University/Very High (RU/VH) institution located in Iowa City, IA. The institution comprises eleven colleges and currently has an annual enrollment of approximately 20,000 degree-seeking undergraduate students and 10,000 professional and graduate students. Five of those colleges enroll undergraduate students; approximately 75% of the undergraduates are enrolled in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS).

The fiscal year 2012 annual budget of the University of Iowa tops $3 billion, split between the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics (UIHC) and all other functions. Excluding the UIHC,[1] about a third of the university budget is funded through tuition revenue, state appropriations, and indirect cost recovery. Over the past twenty years, state appropriations have declined while tuition revenue has increased, fueled by both increases in tuition rates and in the percentage of students who are non-resident. In fiscal year 2012, the state appropriation was smaller than tuition revenue.

The Provost and Executive Vice President serves as the chief academic officer and reports directly to the President of the University. Reporting directly to the Provost are, among others, the Deans of the eleven colleges, the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education (APUE) and the Chief Information Officer (CIO).

Campus information technology (Information Technology Services, ITS) is led by the CIO. ITS-Instructional Services (ITS-IS) is a department within ITS and is responsible for instructional technology planning, maintenance, and faculty support. The ITS-IS department, headed by a Senior Director, includes instructional technologists who work closely with faculty to integrate appropriate technologies—both hardware and software—into their courses. Classroom technology is maintained and installed by ITS. Classroom scheduling is controlled by the Registrar, who reports to the APUE. The Registrar controls a small sum of money that can be used for small classroom maintenance projects.

Curriculum and instruction are controlled by the faculty of the colleges. There is no central curriculum committee. Historically, there has been little central involvement in decisions about the design of curriculum or how courses are taught. The University has a small Center for Teaching (CfT), staffed with a Director and Associate Director. The Director of the CfT reports to the APUE. The CfT offers workshops on subjects related to teaching and pedagogy, consultation services to faculty and graduate students, and longer topic-specific institutes. Figure 1 outlines the reporting structure and the positions of the main people (denoted with an arrow) involved in the TILE project.

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