Chapter 10
Piloting the Change:
Migrating a Learning Management System while Discovering a Project Management Protocol

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Projects that focus on changing existing technology, rather than introducing new technology, have unique challenges and opportunities. These projects incorporate both new and old technology, and while old technologies may be more costly and less effective, users are comfortable with them. This comfort can be a challenge in a time of change. Projects that have a large user base, such as campus-wide projects, pose an even bigger challenge. This case describes the efforts surrounding a pilot program that led to a change in a campus-wide Learning Management System (LMS). This case describes all of the aspects of the project, from the first discussions to the end of the pilot program, and highlights the benefit of a pilot program as a way to instigate change. Faculty from varying departments as well as the Information Technology Department guided the project. In addition to bringing about campus change, this project helped to show the need for a formal IT project management framework.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

Capital University is a mid-sized private institution located in Columbus, Ohio. The university was founded in 1830 and is affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The university has a long history of discussions surrounding its identity with the church as well as with the importance of the blend between professional and liberal arts programs (Burke, 2002). The mission of the university is focused on making a meaningful impact on its students stating:

Transforming lives through higher education. By drawing upon the Lutheran principle of free inquiry, Capital University:

- Provides for personal growth by encouraging, enabling and celebrating learning.
- Prepares individuals to be knowledgeable, independent, critical thinkers – educated for lives of leadership and service in an increasingly diverse society.
- Inspires individuals to be morally reflective, spiritually alive and civically engaged.

According to the university's 2012 comprehensive self-study for reaccreditation by the Higher Learning Commission, the university had an operating budget of more than $75 million during the 2012 fiscal year with total enrollments just under 3,700. The university has a College and Law School. The College contains five schools: the Conservatory of Music and School of Communication, the School of Humanities, the School of Management and Leadership, the School of Natural Sciences, Nursing and Health, and the School of Social Sciences and Education. Within these schools, the university offers 60 majors and 51 minors as well as graduate degrees in nursing, business, music, and education. The university's Law School resides in a separate location about five miles from the main campus. While the campus is largely made up of the residential undergraduate students there is a smaller commuter community among the graduate and even some undergraduate students. Currently the university is on a semester system holding three terms a year in fall, spring, and summer.

During the planning and implementation of the project outlined in this case study, the university was just settling in from some major changes. In 2005, there was a financial crisis when a projected operating deficit of over $12 million dollars was discovered. A change in leadership and fiscal policies quickly turned the deficit into a surplus; however, the experience highlighted the financial fragility of the institution. In 2008, there was a restructuring of the undergraduate program moving from an arrangement of four colleges and schools to a single unified college with five schools. The year 2009 brought a university wide discussion around a strategic planning process that defined seven strategic directions:

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