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EdTech 501 School Evaluation Summary

My Community College (MCC) is one of the most picturesque colleges in the country. All 15 of the cedar shake architecture buildings are connected with wide, spoke like, pathways through the lush green tree canopied lawns of the 100-acre campus. The according to the International Center for College Statistics, the college annually serves a rural Oregon county of over 15,000 students with about 3,200 full-time equivalent students. At $66 per credit, the instate tuition is fairly reasonable. The gender population is 59% female and 41% male. 55% of the student population is over 25 years old and is predominantly white. The retention rates of 55% and 36% for full-time and part-time students respectively, are supported by nearly a 15% faculty to student ratio. There are 62 full-time and 213 part-time faculty. MCC offers Associate of Arts/Science degrees as well as Associate of Applied Science degrees. The college also offers many certificate programs, GED, ESL, adult basic education, small business development, and community education opportunities.

Much of the college's success can be attributed toward the value it places on technology. When asked to evaluate the technological maturity of my college, I felt optimistic the college would do fairly well considering its rural location and size. When assessing the technological maturity of an institution, one must consider the perspectives of the evaluators. In other words, it depends on who you ask. I felt it was best to ask the people in charge of the technology. I spoke with the Network Manager and the Director of Information Technology (IT). The benchmark used was divided into five overall categories: administrative, curricular, support, connectivity, and innovation. Each category was broken into relevant sections and evaluated based on behavioral and resources/infrastructure criteria. The following are the details of the assessment.

Administrative

Policy:

Behavioral – Intelligent
Resource/Infrastructure – Intelligent

There are formalized and approved technology use policies in place and everyone has access to them. However, not everyone knows where to access the policies. IT

is aware of this and plans to conduct trainings as well as improve the usability of the data-shares and web resources where the policies are located.

Planning:

Behavioral – Islands
Resource/Infrastructure – Islands

Even though there is large scale planning taking place, the Director of IT said "we aren't there yet." He said he meets with upper administration and the board every three months. He said the current planning is subject to many smaller and specific projects that need to be addressed. He is new to his role at MCC and is currently in "assessment" mode. Right now, a new building is being constructed on campus for the Southern Oregon Wine Institute and the priority is to focus manpower toward that project.

Budget:

Behavioral – Integrated
Resource/Infrastructure – Intelligent

As I previously stated, IT has a few projects at the forefront of planning so only tentative long term budgeting is underway. MCC places IT as a very high budgeting priority. There are also several individual short term projects that already have money in place. IT is currently updating its redundancy systems both on campus and at the co-location a few miles away. There are also a few projects directed toward facilities and infrastructure already budgeted for.

Administrative Information:

Behavioral – Integrated
Resource/Infrastructure – Integrated

I discussed this category at length with the Network Manager. She said more administrative systems are available than being utilized. While many of the systems have the capabilities of being more digital or paperless, the priority to move that direction has been low. For instance, the HR and Payroll policies are dated requiring printed forms, duplication, and physical signatures. I was told improved options were presented to these departments, but little to no interest was reciprocated. It appears many people are simply used to the traditional way of doing things. I might suggest this could be an opportunity for leadership to instigate change.

Curricular

Electronic Information:

Behavioral – Intelligent

Resource/Infrastructure – Integrated

When talking with the Network Manager, about the curricular use of technology she felt pretty confident MCC was at the front of the pack. She said all of the staff and students depend on the information systems. In fact, the dependency is so great, redundant systems are being updated to sustain reliability. She felt MCC hasn't achieved the intelligent rating for resources and infrastructure because there is always something to improve. Both IT and Staff are encouraged to be on the lookout for better resources.

Assessment:

Behavioral – Intelligent
Resource/Infrastructure – Intelligent

A few years ago, MCC moved to a course management system (CMS) called Angel that provided better reporting and assessment tools for both faculty and students. MCC recently had an accreditation visit highlighting assessment as one of the areas where the college needed improvement. Since then, a myriad of electronic assessment tools have been implemented, including the use of iPads for face to face course assessment as well as classroom response systems "clickers". Many instructors also make use of student electronics portfolios for capstone assessment purposes.

Curriculum Integration:

Behavioral – Intellegent
Resource/Infrastructure – Intelligent

Faculty are encouraged to integrate technology into their curriculum. MCC used to use Moodle as its CMS. While Moodle is not supported by IT or the Distance Education Department, Moodle is still used by a few instructors who locally host it for their face to face courses. Each classroom contains teaching stations filled with multimedia equipment. In addition, teleconferencing and virtual classrooms such as Second Life are also used.

Teacher Use:

Behavioral – Intelligent
Resource/Infrastructure – Intelligent

Faculty are encouraged to integrate technology into their classroom. Obviously, all online courses use technology and have a supported CMS system. MCC used to use

Moodle as its CMS. Moodle is not supported by IT or the Distance Education Department. However, because there is such a huge emphasis on the integration of technology a few instructors locally host it for their face to face courses. In addition, most classrooms have an abundance of technology resources such as portable teaching workstations containing computers and multimedia equipment. Classroom clickers are used during testing and classroom discussion. The use of a computer is indicated on course syllabi as required by course curriculum.

Student Use:

Behavioral – Intelligent
Resource/Infrastructure – Intelligent

The college doesn't issue computers or mobile devices to students, but it does make sure there is ample computer resources available. Like most colleges, computers are located in open computers labs, the library, and in classrooms. Great care is taken to ensure students have access to campus technology and technology assistance during the open hours of the campus. Most courses cannot be completed without the use of some kind of technology. All online students are encouraged to attend instructional seminars before taking an online course. There is a current discussion about making the online orientation a requirement.

Support

Stakeholder Involvement:

Behavioral – Islands
Resource/Infrastructure – Islands

Regrettably, MCC does not get a lot of participation from staff and faculty when planning technology initiatives. This issue is controversial and varies on perception. Most groups are adamant about being represented for nearly all planning and decision making. Unfortunately, an attitude has developed among faculty where many will not venture beyond the classroom voluntarily or without requiring more compensation. A few early adopters seem to be leading the pack.

Administrative Support:

Behavioral – Integrated
Resource/Infrastructure – Integrated

While there isn't significant formal time and support allocated to the planning and implementation of technology, there is a technology committee represented by all groups with the Vice President of Instruction as the committee chair. The college charges a $5.50 per credit technology fee to each student. This fee is intended for only student related technology such as computer labs, helpdesk support, assessment tools and variety of software. The technology committee decides how that income is allocated and there is generally a surplus of funds available.

Training:

Behavioral – Islands
Resource/Infrastructure – Islands

I tend to seek out training or try to learn on my own. After talking with the Network Manager, it is clear initial and ongoing training is built into all available technology. The problem is it is difficult to plan and schedule. It is even more difficult to get staff to attend. There are very few resources available for adjuncts and part time support staff with limited professional development funds provided. Full-time faculty and classified staff have contractual agreements in place that provides funds for professional development which includes technical training.

Technical and Infrastructure Support:

Behavioral – Intelligent
Resource/Infrastructure – Intelligent

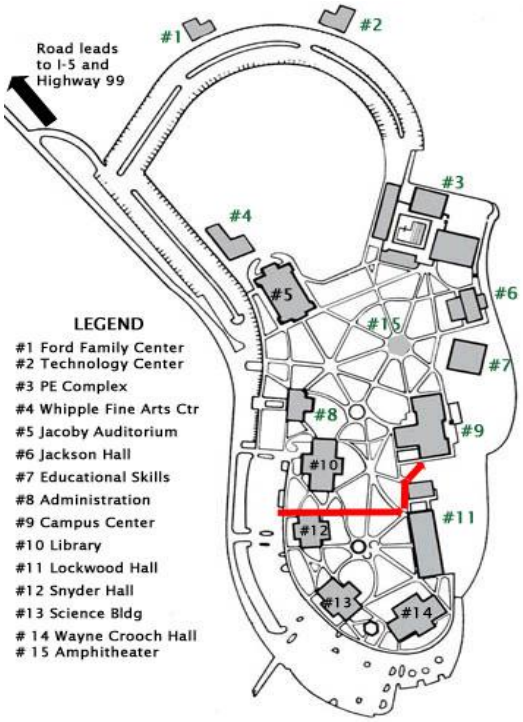
Since I spoke with the two individuals in charge of support, they obviously felt MCC was well supported, fielding numerous support calls on a daily basis. In my own experience, I would say the support is outstanding. Support staff is not available during the weekends, but I can usually have someone on the phone immediately if I need help. There is also a helpdesk and online tutorials for students and staff.

Connectivity

Local Area Network:

Behavioral – Intelligent
Resource/Infrastructure – Intelligent

All of the buildings at MCC's campus are connected via a fiber optic network and are linked with upgradability in mind. When it comes to planning, the campus network infrastructure was designed well ahead of its time. The telephony systems are all voice over IP systems capable of audio, video, and data. At one time wireless access was a problem because most of the building walls are made of mortar and rock over a foot thick. Now, the campus has WiFi available in every area capable of video and voice data rates.



District Area Network:

Behavioral – Intelligent
Resource/Infrastructure – Intelligent

I can remember a time at MCC when there were only eight phone lines to the campus. Today, MCC is located a mile away from and connected to the main fiber optic trunk for the west coast. The campus is able to use voice, video, and sophisticated data transmissions with ease. The Network Manager said MCC had the same connection options and band width most large universities have. There is also the option to expand. As far as I know, the campus does not have voice over broadband and SMS set up yet. The school's network co-location is in the heart of a designated e-commerce zone.

Internet Access:

Behavioral – Integrated
Resource/Infrastructure – Intelligent

Every computer on campus has high speed Internet access. Most of the computers for students on campus are desktop computers and do not have video camera capability. There are video conference rooms available for staff. The college has issued smart phones to some staff. I wouldn't say video and voice is extensively used, but it is available.

Communication System:

Behavioral – Intelligent
Resource/Infrastructure – Intelligent

All students and staff have email accounts with MCC. Email and other electronic correspondence methods are not only used, but essential for productivity. Campus alerts such as snow delays and campus closures are posted on the college website, through email, and via automated voice or SMS to student and staff phones. Students select which notification methods they want during registration.

Innovation

New Technologies:

Behavioral – Integrated
Resource/Infrastructure – Integrated

I asked the Director of IT about new technologies. He said the college readily accepts new technology. However, he said it is very difficult and expensive to systematically adopt new technologies in a school without some sort of special funding. There is a great deal of risk involved with new technology and it is often wise let standards be adopted before investing too early.

Comprehensive Technologies:

Behavioral – Intelligent
Resource/Infrastructure – Intelligent

As I said before, even though MCC may have the infrastructure and capability for more advanced technology use, the demand often dictates what direction the college goes. Most of the school's technology resources were planned to sustain the college for many years.

Summary

I would say MCC is fairly technologically mature. There were only six areas where the college rated as Islands and no Emergent areas. The Integrated and Intelligent areas had an equal number of ratings. Most of the college's technology is underutilized or over designed. This can be due to the need for more staff and student education or simply preparation for the future.

While working through the different categories I realized the benchmark mainly pertained to the instructional side of an institution. For instance, there were no categories for security or facilities. Some students and staff may find it unsettling there are only security cameras in the bookstore and none on campus to ensure their safety. There was also no mention of network security. It would seem relevant for all groups to know their information is safe.

The IT Director pointed out the importance of a solid network and data infrastructure was one of the most important items to have in place first before considering the other aspects. His staff spends a great deal of time not only making sure everyone has all that technology has to offer, but also that it is safe and secure. Lately IT efforts have been to increase storage, security, and redundancy. Power backup is also a huge concern. Since MCC is so dependent on technology, it is probably a good idea there are precautions in place to prevent outages. It is also important for IT to ensure all of the hardware and software installed on the college's systems are supported by reputable and reliable sources. This benchmark appears to assume all of that is already in place.

The school has some trouble areas around staff involvement and training. The Network Manager said this was nothing new. The IT Director mentioned this was a common problem that is constantly in contention. This is probably more of a human issue than a technology issue. Since human issues are often solved with information and education, this poses a great argument for the relevancy of education technology.