

# Organizational Practices and Policies

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Through reflective practice, faculty and other members of an academic community can begin to recognize what it is that they as a community have learned and are learning as they engage in the challenging and sometimes overwhelming process of technology integration. In recognizing that successful computer technology integration is an evolving and collaborative learning process, rather than the acquisition of a technical equipment or the use of sophisticated software, members of an academic community can begin to see themselves as educational technology leaders no matter what stage of technological development they happen to be in.

The HCI Group at Cornell (papers available at <http://www.hci.cornell.edu>) has been studying the use of computers in a number of environments for the past 14 years. I decided to highlight a few of the organizational issues and general themes that have emerged from some of our studies as they relate to the use of computer technology in academic communities as follows:

- 1) Organizational practices and policies define the day-to-day experiences of community members, and shape the cultures in which they work and learn. By examining the organizational practices and policies that have been established to handle computer technology issues, an institution can assess whether those practices and policies reinforce certain interpretations of technology over others, and whether they are consistent with the pedagogical goals and organizational values.
- 2) It is important for a school to construct a meaningful vision for its educational technology program. However, when the construction of that vision is perceived to be the responsibility of one individual, small group of technical staff, or a small group of faculty, other community members may find it difficult to see their own leadership potential in the area of educational technology. These faculty or staff may feel unwilling or unqualified to assume responsibility for helping to develop and maintain the technical infrastructure of their particular college or university.
- 3) A university's historical experience with technology can have a powerful influence over the way in which a particular community comes to understand technology and how computers can be integrated into the environment. By reflecting on its own technological history, a university may be able to understand why certain beliefs and assumptions about computer technology have become taken for granted in the university, and assess how these tactic assumptions may be affecting faculty members' and students' relationships with computer technology.
- 4) Decisions about resource allocation, training and technical support convey messages to the community about the university's technological values and beliefs. By not involving diverse members of the university community in

decisions that have an impact on the technology culture, a university not only denies practitioners a voice in shaping the technical environments in which they work, but it can also make it difficult for technical staff and administrators to fully understand the practical, everyday technology needs of faculty and students.

5) Although a school may have economic, technical or even pedagogical reasons for targeting technical support and resources toward specific computer projects, there is a social cost to granting preference to certain projects or certain uses of technology over others. By defining technology integration as the development of individual products, rather than as a community-wide, reflective process, a school may alienate those faculty who feel their work is not valued, and miss out on the opportunity to learn from the whole spectrum of faculty members' and students' technical experience.

Note: The links and research on the wireless computing project are at:  
<http://www.nomad.cornell.edu/>