

University of Washington IT Service Management Board Recommendations for Increasing Efficiency and Capacity

October 13, 2021

Executive Summary

The Service Management Board (SMB) is one of three Advisory Boards to the University of Washington CIO and UW-IT Vice President. The board includes members representing various colleges, schools, and units across all three campuses. The CIO asked the current board members to identify opportunities that could increase efficiency and capacity in IT across the University. With that charge, the SMB has developed the following recommendations for consideration as UW-IT considers strategic priorities and investments:

1. Improve Procurement Processes for Software and Software As A Service
2. Promote the use of centrally funded software, services, and tools
3. Identify and drive efficiencies in application/admissions systems, processes, and data management
4. Enable a Learning Management System for employee compliance training and workforce development

Each of these recommendations has the full support of the Service Management Board.

Background

In September of 2020, the Service Management Board (SMB) welcomed three newly appointed members – representing the Graduate School, the School of Medicine, and Health Sciences Administration – to fill the seats of members who transitioned off the board over the summer.

A special kickoff meeting familiarized the new appointees with the past work of the SMB, provided a foundational overview of the Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL 4) set of best practices for IT service management, and introduced them to the key purpose of the SMB, including to ensure alignment of UW Information Technology services with UW strategy and priorities, and to optimize the design, delivery, operation and sourcing of IT services.

With the new board members in place, the first topic of conversation for the full group looked back on the SMB's past work. Specifically, two questions were posed: 1) Do the SMB recommendations published in February of 2020 still hold true when viewed through today's "COVID lens?" and 2) knowing what we know now, would we prioritize anything differently? We ultimately agreed that each of the previous recommendations remained both applicable and important.

To guide the next efforts of the board, Aaron Powell, CIO and UW-IT Vice President, was invited to speak about current IT challenges and opportunities from his point of view. With his input, the board set out with the charge to review the services defined in the UW-IT Service Catalog and determine which, if any, could be moved to retirement or provisioned in an alternative way that could result in freeing up resource capacity for other work.

For the next two months, the board categorized and reviewed each service offered in the catalog but found it challenging to identify any services that compelled a recommendation for change. After reaching the decision that the current service offerings were already lean, the board made the decision to table this effort and seek out other opportunities.

A byproduct of the Service Catalog review was productive discussions about a particular inefficiency related to IT across the University – ongoing duplication of effort. These discussions prompted the board to pivot their effort and concentrate on possible remedies to this issue for the tri-campus community. That work led to the development of the 2021 SMB recommendations highlighted above and detailed below.

Recommendation Details

1. Improve Procurement Processes for Software and Software As A Service

OPPORTUNITY:

Improve the value of IT spend by implementing a defined IT procurement process for software and software as a service (SAAS) stewarded by UW-IT. Create an enterprise process to steward the procurement of third-party software. The process will leverage tools, databases, processes, procedures, and a community of subject matter experts to make visible existing investments, ensure compliance for existing and new software procurement, and enable the reuse of existing software and contracts. This process will also support UW's commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and sustainability goals.

SUMMARY:

There are complex requirements associated with IT procurement that are difficult to navigate, have a high level of complexity, and require specialized knowledge. Different offices oversee these UW/UW Medicine requirements, and IT staff need to navigate between these offices. Additionally, IT purchases with non-contract vendors are atomized by departments at the UW. This inefficiency inhibits the UW from sourcing new innovative software solutions, broadening the use of already purchased solutions, recognizing opportunities for pricing leverage, and reusing the due diligence artifacts from previous interactions with that vendor. Departmental IT staff who are not fully versed in the requirements may not demonstrate the appropriate level of due diligence and expose the institution to greater risk.

A robust process would give UW-IT and UW procurement greater visibility into total enterprise IT spend, better management of data risk related to IT goods and services, and increased pricing leverage with vendors. In addition, it would improve the ability to share vendor solutions across departments and align with the UW-IT IT Sourcing initiative. Such a process would ideally result in the following outcomes:

- A defined IT software procurement process stewarded by UW-IT.
 - IT software procurement service that recommends existing tools, assists with review and assessment of new products, and negotiate vendor terms, that not only prescribes guidelines but assists units to interpret and negotiate vendor terms (cyber liability, data security, privacy, accessibility and possibly even price), and to assess and summarize overall IT risk.

- Increased visibility for contracts and agreements in a database covering existing IT goods and services.
- A way for the institution to see the broad range of IT investments in vendor products adopted by departmental IT groups that are not already covered by campus agreements.
- Reduced risk associated with use of software and SAAS.
- Improved value for IT spend over time.
- Reduced average time to procurement for software and SAAS.

RECOMMENDATION:

- In collaboration with UW Procurement, UW Privacy, and the UW Accessibility Office, UW-IT should establish a business unit to provide coordinated consultation, vendor negotiation support and oversight for the purchase of software and SAAS.
- We recommend more transparency and enterprise visibility for UW Contracts and departmental agreements for IT goods and services. One possibility is to improve the UW Contracts database to include departmental agreements, especially agreements for Software and SAAS.
- UW-IT partner with UW Computing Directors to sustain the UW Distributed IT Software Registry (informally called UnUware).
- Align UWFT Procurement Process Improvement with IT Sourcing Process Improvement.

2. Promote the use of centrally funded software, services, and tools

OPPORTUNITY:

Improve tri-campus efficiency by promoting increased adoption and utilization of the software, services, and tools already available to the entire University community, through either the Technology Recharge Fee or central funding, at no additional cost.

SUMMARY:

The University of Washington provides a robust set of IT services, software, and solutions to the tri-campus community that are fully funded either through the Technology Recharge Fee (TRF) or through university funding. The Service Management Board agrees that these services tend to be underused, leading to duplicative effort and spend on solutions that mirror the capabilities of those already provided by the University. By pushing to increase the adoption and use of centrally-funded/centrally-provided services, we can reduce redundant campus spend and effort and to effectively free up capacity for work on other projects and opportunities.

Examples of centrally-funded services that continue to be functionally duplicated throughout the University include the Husky OnNet and OnNet-D VPN services, Enterprise Document Management, UW Sites, and Shared Web Hosting. Additional inefficiencies relate to the investigation and planning around Cloud Services, Azure Active Directory, IT Vendor Risk Management, and User Experience design, where UW-IT is funded to provide consulting services. By specifying and promoting services like these as the recommended “first-choice” solutions for the tri-campus community, we can gain efficiencies and eliminate wasteful “reinventing the wheel” situations.

Further benefits of promoting the use of centrally-funded solutions include:

- Improved support for data governance and privacy practice by reducing the use of unofficial/unsupported applications.

- Increased economies of scale benefits related to procurement, support, training.
- Improved return on investment on the TRF per capita rate paid by the UW academic and administrative units.

In addition, some centrally-funded services are widely adopted but not used to their full potential. Those services could benefit from additional training, support, and promotion to get the most out of the University's investment. For instance, the Microsoft Campus Agreement includes a robust catalog of applications and features underutilized in the tri-campus community. A concerted effort to elevate the expertise of the community can help the University realize a better return on these investments.

RECOMMENDATION:

- Develop and socialize the concept of a campus standard for applications and services that specifies the use of centrally-funded solutions as the "first choice."
- Actively campaign and advocate for the adoption and use of solutions that are centrally funded.
- Catch and correct duplicative efforts/solutions while projects are still in the ideation or procurement phase.
- Provide and advertise both lightweight (self-service) and deep-dive training resources for centrally-funded solutions to ensure broad adoption, improved skillsets, and long-term success.
- Continue to support consulting services to assist with analysis, planning, and migration to centrally-funded solutions.

3. Identify and drive efficiencies in application/admissions systems, processes, and data management.

OPPORTUNITY:

Across the University of Washington's three campuses between undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs, there are at least 15 different admissions systems. Each of these systems has a cost in dollars and FTE time and training for using the system. Each has different processes for entering admissions data into the Student Database, either through an automated process or manual data entry. There is no current consideration for vast economies of scale that could be realized by standardizing on one system. Our goal is to improve the tools staff and students use to interact with application data and find a common approach to automate the interface with the Student Database for entering applications.

SUMMARY:

The UW has no central approach for admission systems, for admissions data entry into the Student Database, or for reporting on admissions statistics. Many units across campus have created their own solutions causing duplication of effort and expense. Many of the admissions systems require manual data entry of admissions data into the Student Database. Some admissions processes require applicants to complete two applications duplicating all of their data. A lack of data sharing capabilities makes passing the information we do have—either to college, school, or department admission teams or to the University of Washington Tacoma and the University of Washington Bothell—unnecessarily challenging.

There is a need for a standard automated approach for getting all admissions data into the Student Database at both the undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs, as well as with the Continuum College. We support the effort to move the professional graduate programs that use national applications to automate their upload of applications to the Student Database. Alternatively,

we would encourage integrating with an admissions system that already has automated uploads to the Student Database, such as Slate, which supports integration with many national applications.

UW Bothell and UW Tacoma have deployed Slate for undergraduate admissions. Seattle should examine the Slate software towards the goal of a single solution for undergraduate admissions at all three campuses. Recognizing that data requirements will be different, we suggest exploring Slate as a solution for graduate admissions, as well. As an admissions solution, Slate offers integration with The Law School Admissions Council admission system used by the University of Washington Law School and the Liaison's Centralized Application Service used by many of UW's professional programs.

RECOMMENDATION:

The University of Washington should support automated integration with the Student Database for all applicant admissions systems to streamline staff workflows and decrease the need for manual data entry. At a minimum, this would include application data that has been downloaded from an external system and normalized to match UW application data standards, but which could also include application data maintained by current students, grading data maintained by registrars, etc. As a path towards supporting automated integration with the Student Database by national applications, the University should pursue a centralized application for admissions and review system that will integrate with the Law School Admissions Council, American Medical College Application Service, and many other Centralized Application Service admission systems that are used by University of Washington Colleges and Schools. This will facilitate data sharing and empower a single data governance team to ensure admission data is consistent and of high quality.

4. Enable a Learning Management System for employee compliance training and workforce development

Opportunity:

Identify a platform and funding for a standard tri-campus employee Learning Management System (LMS) focused on delivering compliance training and workforce development. The LMS will enable a 'one-stop-shop' employee experience, enhance the quality of training, improve responsiveness to changing compliance needs, decrease duplicative efforts, and facilitate reporting. The funding model of the existing employee LMS platform (currently Bridge) presents a barrier to entry for departments who want to scale training across the University of Washington.

Summary:

A single employee LMS would fill the broad compliance and workforce development needs across the tri-campuses.

Compliance training and reporting needs:

The University has seen an increase in requirements for mandatory compliance training from state and federal entities. However, currently, there is no single, enterprise-wide mechanism to develop, deploy, track, and report on the completion and compliance of those requirements across the University of Washington. This gap is a risk to the University as it can result in fines, impacts to health and safety, or diminishment of our reputation.

Workforce development needs:

There is also a pressing need for workforce development to ensure employees have the most relevant skills and knowledge to perform their job functions and duties effectively. This need is significant given the upcoming changes to Enterprise Administrative Systems and the high demand for job training and reskilling.

Benefits of a tri-campus platform:

- *Enable a 'One-Stop-Shop'* - Employees can easily find and complete all training requirements.
- *Enhance Quality* - Enable subject matter experts to develop and distribute UW-wide training.
- *Improve Responsiveness* - Ability to respond to changing compliance requirements quickly.
- *Increase Efficiency* - Reduces the proliferation of systems and the number of people developing, updating, and tracking training.
- *Facilitate Reporting* - All training activities and assessments are recorded and tracked.

Examples of Critical Compliance Training & Workforce Development Needs:

- Sexual Harassment Prevention Training
- HR Training for Hiring Managers
- State Bill 5228 Requiring diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracism training and assessments at institutions of higher education
- Security education training (e.g., CyberSecurity Awareness)
- Privacy education training (e.g., Data Stewardship)
- Compliance awareness and training (e.g., FERPA, GLBA, PII)
- Research Administration
- Environmental Health & Safety Training
- Professional Organization and Development
- Finance Transformation training modules
- Merchant Services (e.g., TouchNet, PCI)
- Accessible Technology Services (e.g., State Policy 188, web accessibility, VPAT)

Recommendation:

Identify a platform and funding for a standard, tri-campus employee LMS to facilitate the development, deployment, tracking, and reporting for compliance and workforce development.

Given the decentralized nature of the UW, and the increasing need to address compliance requirements, one or more departments may be in the process of procuring an employee LMS. We recommend working with UW Procurement to see if one of those could be leveraged for the tri-campus. Any system purchased must meet UW's requirements for privacy, security, and accessibility.