

1995

Information Services Annual Report, 1994-95

Bates College

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Introduction:

Managing daily operations, constructing annual operations plans and budgets, discussing Information Services philosophy, resolving personnel issues, and attempting to derive three year strategic plans, all concurrently, is a challenging task. Defining “what we want to be” , “who we are” and “how we want to operate” are the greatest challenges. We seem to address the daily issues and yearly tasks well due in large part to the staff. We have made progress over the past year, but there is much progress yet to be made. The following document is a recap of 1994 - 1995 and identifies some of the issues to be addressed in the coming year.

I. Initial Goals

- Phase II for residence networking
- Banner implementations for Finance, Alumni/Development,HR
- Introduction of office productivity tools
- Phase I upgrading of obsolete equipment
- Completion of three year plan to upgrade administrative office
- Phone system upgrade
- Internet connection upgrade
- Standardize on minimum software and hardware installation
- Provide technology classroom design assistance
- Explore mechanisms for providing additional services (eg.
- Library hardware system upgrade
- Academic hardware system upgrade

II. Accomplishments

- We are on schedule to complete the residence networking this summer (1995). This will leave one or two isolated areas without network connections and these will be addressed directly in the coming year.

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- Banner Finance was implemented “successfully”. A great deal of discomfort has surfaced among College constituents around the process changes in the finance area which were introduced along with Banner. These will take (best estimate) approximately two years to iron themselves out.

- Banner Alumni will be implemented in August and Banner HR has been deferred into late 1996.

- We upgraded our telephone system. This upgrade increased the number of available phone lines and numbers for the College as well as increasing functionality of the system to support more “automated teller” type functions.

- We upgraded our internet connection to a partial T1 connection. As the physical size, resources and traffic on the network had grown so had our need to provide capacity for the use of network resources. The upgrade increased our ability to handle larger volumes of traffic over our internet connection.

- We provided design support for the development of electronic teaching spaces for Library renovations, foreign language multi-media consortium, math department grant, new academic building design, and evolving design of the Libbey electronic classroom.

- We continue to upgrade administrative office desktop technology in conjunction with needs surrounding Banner implementation.

- We continue to upgrade faculty office desktop technology in conjunction with needs.

- We have planned for and will expend financial resources for the upgrade of technology and software for Treat Gallery, the Library staff, the Library computer lab, the public Carnegie Lab, the Psychology lab and others.

- Our resellers efforts produced close to \$1,000,000 dollars in computer and related technology and software sales.

- Our “Help Desk” continues to effectively resolve questions and problems from our College constituents on technology and software issues. It is important to note that staffing of this service is comprised of people from all areas of Information Services. As one example, we actively have Library and Technical Services people sitting side by side resolving information issues of the College community.

- Our Software Team is exploring standard interfaces to resources for our College constituents and developing techniques for performing software installations and upgrades over the network.

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- Opportunities were provided for staff development.
- The Install Team and the Network Installation Team both have helped communication, process definition, and problem solving.
- The Management Team has improved their internal processes. Having Gene on the Team has added skills and perspectives that have been valuable assets to the functioning of the group.
- Successes in supporting innovative teaching (David Kolb, Michael Murray, Sarah Strong) through “new” technologies.
- Our CWIS (Campus Wide Information System) Team has made progress on creating an information base by working closely with the user community. Again this team is comprised of people from all across campus making decisions about resource selection and “page design”.
- Increased cooperation between the Library and Computing (i.e. Software Team focus on improved services to users such as delivery of Lexis/Nexis and the Life Sciences Collection.)
- The Network Team installation process has been an iterative process to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of network installations as the network has grown. It has been a valuable process of self-evaluation and improvement from year to year and will become a model process for other services in Information Services.
- Made progress in integrating Audio Visual and Media Services into Information Services.

III. Strengths

- Our greatest strength continues to be our people. Many Information Services employees are truly devoted to the students, constituents, goals, and mission of Bates College.

Note: This was a particularly difficult year for the staff. We had many internal issues with which to deal. The systems group went through a great staff upheaval and unexpected death of one of its members. Through all that has happened, the staff has responded by maintaining schedules and services to the Bates community with a very high level of professionalism.

- We find that in many cases we continue to lead our competitors in providing information services to our College community. As we complete our networking

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project we find that Colby and Bowdoin are both playing "catch up". Colby has only limited residence networking established and is beginning to plan for more while Bowdoin is scheduling to throw money at the issue in order to implement residence networking. We believe that as they catch up in the infrastructure area we will be able to out pace them in the services area. Our gopher and WWW services are evolving rapidly and our Software Team planning will continue to enhance services to our constituents.

IV. Obstacles

- Budgets and the Budget process continue to be issues for Information Services. We have been fiscally responsible in the managing of the Information Services budgets over the past several years. We have received great support from the President, Trustees, and Senior Staff in the projects we have outlined to provide Bates with superior information resources (i.e. Campus networking, Banner implementation, etc.). However, providing superior services is not a one time cost. We have repeatedly outlined the need for annual operating funds to provide for routine desktop upgrades to take advantage of information resources. This item has repeatedly met with resistance in terms of being included as operating expense. Thus, we have to apply for capital funds on an annual basis with the unknown outcome of whether approval will be given or money will materialize to support these needed resources.

The second issue relating to budgets is the lack of a well defined capitalization process. When large scale projects are approved, such as the network or Banner, the money is referred to as "capitalized" yet the expenditures are taken from the operating budget. This makes operating budget tracking and management extremely difficult. Case in point is that this year we have literally run out of operating budget funds a month and a half before the end of year. In fact over \$600,000 of operating expense is directly attributable to the network and Banner. This creates unnecessary work on our part to justify continued operating expense requirements in the current year.

- We were unable to have \$200,000 for annual upgrades to obsolete equipment included in our operating budget. This has impacted our ability to address major obsolescence for many faculty and the public lab equipment. We are adjusting our regular equipment expenditures in an attempt to replace these obsolete machines on an as needed basis. These adjustments have an impact on other equipment purchases.

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Note : Bowdoin and Colby have been allocated money for desktop replacement strategies. We know that Colby is going to turn to a leasing strategy to account for technology rollover on a routine basis. Although we do not know the exact nature of the Bowdoin strategy we do know that money has been allocated to upgrade current desktop obsolescence.

- The high level of staff turnover and replacement this past year has been an obstacle in certain respects. The time spent searching for replacements and the learning curve for people unfamiliar with our operating systems, procedures, the Banner project, etc. have taken their toll on the staff and morale. We appear to have weathered that period and are coming back on target on projects and services. One note of importance in this process is the fact that we found our base salary structure to be an issue in hiring strongly qualified people. We hope that this will be addressed in the 1996-1997 salary year.

V. Weaknesses

- We have not made as much progress in defining the organization and in communicating within Information Services and with our users as we would have liked. The need for improved communication was consistently listed as a high priority by Information Services staff in our recent all-day meeting.

VI. Major 94 - 95 Plans

- Improved communications and public relations both internally and externally to Information Services.
- Work with IS staff to continue defining the IS organization.
- Implementation of Personnel evaluation procedures.
- Continued implementation of the Banner product; scheduled for Alumni, Student, and Financial Aid.
- Expand network services to include additional information resources.
- Evaluation of the implementation of an Operations Center for the College
- Implementation of more electronic classroom areas.
- Upgrades to Mithras, Abacus, and Ladd.

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- Increase efforts to acquire appropriate technology to support needed information resources for students, faculty, and staff.
- Continue to analyze audio-visual processes. Work with staff and users in this area to define key services. Explore options for improving video production and multi-media services.
- Provide training opportunities for staff in these areas:
 - Sexual harassment
 - Safety on the job (OSHA)
 - Assuming personal responsibility for actions on the job
- Improve data extraction processes in support of academic research based on data analysis, particularly in the social sciences.
- Continue to develop GUI-based interfaces to network services.
- Develop a stronger client-centered focus in Information Services.

Respectfully submitted by :

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