INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY STRATEGIC PLAN

2022 - 2025

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI®

iTech
AT SOUTHERN MISS

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INTRODUCTION

The Information Technology Services Department (iTech) is pleased to provide this IT Strategic Plan that is designed to augment the mission, vision, and values of The University of Southern Mississippi.

VISION STATEMENT

iTech will be the trusted partner that provides secure, reliable, and cost-effective technology solutions to the students, faculty, and staff in alignment with the mission and goals of The University of Southern Mississippi.

MISSION STATEMENT

iTech is tasked to provide exceptional technological services to all The University of Southern Mississippi locations in a cost-effective, efficient, and proactive manner. We will work with the students, faculty, and staff to determine needs, establish expectations, and provide solutions that enable the University to achieve its goals and fulfill its mission.

A LETTER FROM THE CIO

The Information Technology Services department is committed to providing technology solutions that support education, research, and service at The University of Southern Mississippi. I am pleased to present this update to our IT Strategic Plan that outlines technology objectives to be completed over the next few years. This plan, in collaboration with many university constituents, demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that we continue to identify those goals, initiatives, and strategies that are most important to the University.

We remain committed, through our values of transparency, collaboration, respect, continuous improvement, and service to the delivery of quality technology solutions in support of the University's mission. We are dedicated to providing proactive and modern tools for the needs of our students, faculty, and staff.

From student recruitment to alumni engagement to global outreach, information technology plays a vital role. Whether it is authenticating to a wireless network locally or from halfway around the world, iTech strives to directly support the university's commitment to excellence and advanced technology.

On behalf of the entire iTech family of dedicated professionals, I thank you for your continued interest and support as we strive to keep Southern Miss at the top.

SMTTT!

David J Sliman
Chief Information Officer
Information Technology Services

CORE VALUES

iTech commits to fostering a community of:

TRANSPARENCY

We cherish open communication and welcome evaluation of business processes.

RESPECT

We will treat all with honesty, integrity, fairness, inclusivity, and professionalism.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

We encourage the constant review of our policies and procedures and promote on-going learning and development of our employees.

COLLABORATION

We strive to provide technology to assist in creating a collaborative environment to allow the sharing of varied perspectives, knowledge, and the building of effective partnerships.

SECURITY

We intend to ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of university data assets.

SERVICE

We aim to provide excellent service by being responsive, reliable, and accessible to all.

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

Ability to offer high quality services with a minimal number of employees

Ability to remain current with network and data center infrastructure technologies

Commitment and dedication of iTech staff

Advanced disaster recovery posture

Award-winning iSouthernMS mobile app

Very supportive and knowledgeable Help Desk staff and Desktop Technicians

WEAKNESSES

Need to increase employee training, on software and systems and provide time to renew or obtain IT certifications.

Constrained budget for employee pay

A staffing plan is needed to address technology skills gaps, redundant technology support, and succession planning

Inability to set or limit university criteria for technology adoption

Lack direct knowledge of university long and short-term technology project needs

OPPORTUNITIES

More access to online training is available for some iTech staff

Implementation of the Information Security Advisory Committee

Support for researchers to house data in a secure environment

Increasing demand for Project Management

Explore possibilities for IT staff to be more competitive

Establish an IT or CIO Governance Council

THREATS

Cyber Security Threat Actors

Competitiveness of labor market impacting retaining and hiring employees

Loss of institutional knowledge and experience with eventual staff retirements

Technology decision making does not always include technology subject matter experts

USM CONTEXT

In updating the IT Strategic Plan, it was critical to include the needs and wants of the broader University community. To gather those perspectives, several individual meetings were held to collect input from a diverse set of sources across USM, including interviews with vice presidents and academic deans. Those conversations focused both on organizational priorities and how IT can enable and support their areas. Through those conversations, a few recurring themes came to light that highlight USM priorities and have implications for how we think about and deploy technology.

UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC GOALS DRIVE THE IT STRATEGIC PLAN

For iTech to deliver relevant IT services to the university, it is imperative that our objectives align with the goals of the University.

UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC GOALS	IT STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES
1 Support student success to foster retention, progression, and graduation **2** Promote teaching, research, and creative excellence	**1** Support students, faculty, and staff with secure access to university technology, systems, and data
5 Invest in faculty and staff to maximize their potential **6** Promote a culture of inclusiveness of people and ideas	**2** Invest in our faculty and staff by promoting learning, training, and professional development to maximize their potential
7 Enhance physical, technological, and financial infrastructure to support our mission, vision, and values	**3** Enhance the overall University IT infrastructure and classroom technology by following industry best practices, setting technology standards, utilizing the Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) framework, and project management
8 Improve efficiency and effectiveness of institutional processes and systems	**4** Perform continuous service improvement to increase the efficiency, reliability, and cost effectiveness of university enterprise applications and processes

IT STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #1

Support students, faculty, and staff with secure access to university technology, systems, and data.

Technology can be a key enabler for process improvement, employee productivity, and enhanced interactions with students, faculty, and staff. A top priority for the university Information Technology Services department is information security. In addition to the current security features in place, there will be a further push to enhance the security of users, systems, and data.

The University community has access to a great deal of data about the academics and the administrative operations of the institution. There is an opportunity to use the data as a strategic asset to assess and improve academic outcomes as well as streamline operations. Current and yet to be obtained data can serve as a basis for continuous improvement, helping identify strengths and weaknesses while testing and rolling out the best changes.

IT STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

- Move towards a Zero Trust Security strategy wherein security policies are applied based not only on assumed trust, but on context established through least-privileged access controls and strict user authentication.
- Establish a Secure Network Enclave for researchers with grants needing a more secure computing and data storage environment.
- Provide support for the establishment of a university-wide data management program with an emphasis on student engagements, disparate data consolidation, and updating data sharing agreements.

IT STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #2

Invest in our faculty and staff by promoting learning, training, and professional development to maximize their potential.

Faculty and staff training and development programs are essential to the success of the University. These programs offer opportunities for faculty and staff to develop their skills, enhance employee productivity, and improve the culture of the University. As technology advances and workplace procedures change, there is a need for the University and employees to align with these changes in terms of knowledge, skills, values, and abilities. One of the best ways to enhance knowledge and skills is through training. Getting employees introduced to relevant and consistent training can help the University improve performance, reduce employee turnover, and increase efficiency in the workplace.

IT STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

- iTech will assist departments in providing full and refresher training courses for university enterprise applications, preferably offered via video, online, and in person.
- Assist in support of classroom equipment and provide faculty with written instructions on how to troubleshoot or get support quickly when teaching during day and evening classes.

IT STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #3

Enhance the overall University IT infrastructure and classroom technology by following industry best practices, setting technology standards, utilizing the ITIL framework, and project management.

Investing in the IT infrastructure is nothing new for the University. With constant security threats, recent weather events, and the ongoing pandemic, iTech knows that investing in and maintaining a healthy IT infrastructure is an important departmental function. Having a current and modern IT infrastructure allows the University to adapt to internal and external influences that effect teaching, learning, the overall university business, and campus life.

IT STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

- Expand the use of the Virtual Desktop infrastructure to include more areas of the university and increase the number of classrooms that have computers available for the presenters.

- Establish an IT or CIO Governance Council from different areas across the university to meet regularly so functional users can discuss data and technology with IT leadership.

- Continue to reduce the number of aging personal computers in the university's inventory.

- Manage key initiative implementations using a project management framework and business analysis processes combined with stakeholder sponsorship to deliver successful completion.

IT STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #4

Perform continuous service improvement to increase the efficiency, reliability, and cost effectiveness of university enterprise applications and processes.
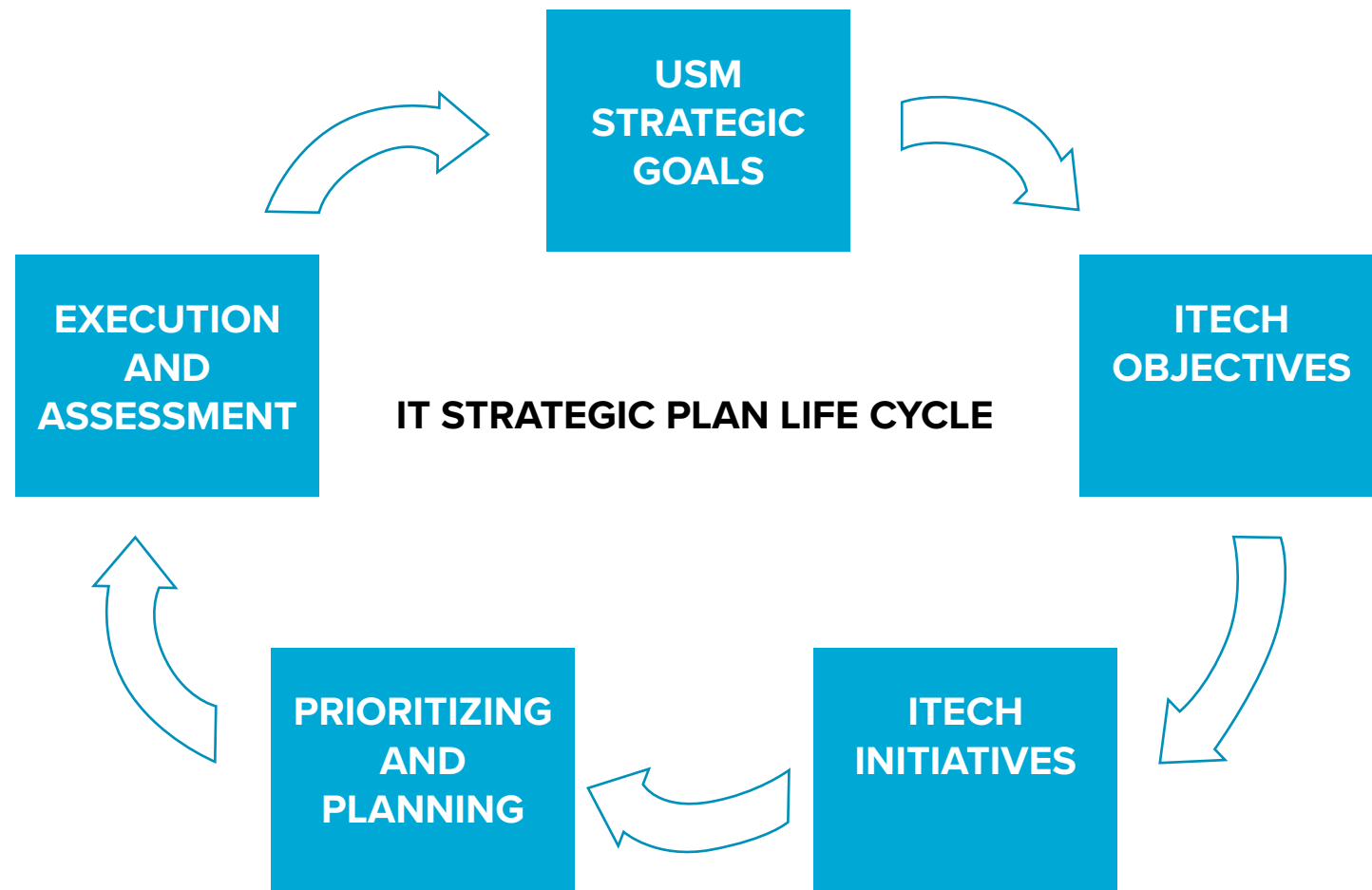
Change is constant, and that is very evident in the ever-changing world of information technology. Students, faculty, and staff prefer to use modern applications that are fast and mobile friendly. It is the intention of iTech to provide modern, flexible, and integrated enterprise applications to support the university and increase operational effectiveness while continuously improving quality. In collaboration with university functional experts, iTech will strive to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the university through business process reengineering, software acquisition, and continued digital transformation.

IT STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

- Investigate alternative Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and Student systems.

- Explore avenues to increase productivity with updated business processes.

- Increase the use of workflow and examine the use of third-party software integrations.

- Assist in the continued digitization of paper documents into electronic formats and pursue the use of electronic signatures.

- Improve the experience with MS Office 365 and expand the use of SharePoint and OneDrive.

- Emphasize the use of a standard encryption protocol across all platforms.

- Examine the benefits and drawbacks of consolidation of university technology under the responsibility and direction of iTech.

IT STRATEGIC PLAN LIFE CYCLE

IT STRATEGIC PLAN LIFE CYCLE

USM STRATEGIC GOALS → ITECH OBJECTIVES → ITECH INITIATIVES → PRIORITIZING AND PLANNING → EXECUTION AND ASSESSMENT

PROPOSED PROJECTS

Information Technology Services (iTech) is constantly planning, monitoring, and upgrading the systems and infrastructure for the entire University. In addition to the daily technical services provided, projects that are planned, should funds be available, may be viewed on the iTech website.

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