Information Technology "Turning Points"

In the September 2001 issue of **EDUTECH** Reports, several "turning points" were described. From recent research of higher education, the newsletter tells about areas where real progress has occurred with information technology on colleges. I would like to share these with you in an executive summary format. They may be very useful in your thinking about the technology on your campus.

1. Online learning environment: Most colleges no longer wonder about distance learning. They now have either decided to do it or not go in that direction. The use of instructional management systems in traditional courses continues to grow. There is now a strong need for a college to have one standard system for the entire campus. Also it is becoming very important that the standard system be linked to the student information system.

2. Computer and Internet friendly classrooms: Classrooms are being renovated to add a projection system with the computer connected to the Internet. Demand continues strong for electronically enhanced classrooms but the costs are still very expensive.

3. Self-service: The new standard is to provide as many services as possible directly to students using a Web browser. Far from impersonalizing the student relationship, self-service is seen as a way to provide even better service, augmenting traditional offices, and office hours rather than replacing them.

4. Network: The network connections are now everywhere on a campus with serious commitments to increase the bandwidth to accommodate instruction, peer to per sharing (such as music), and online student services.

5. Wireless: Colleges are using wireless networks to add another dimension to the existing network, not to replace it. The emphasis on wireless in covering gathering places, science labs, libraries and other specialized areas.

6. Investment, replacement, strategic planning: The IT budget is now viewed as an investment more than an expense. It is strategically significant for the success of the institution.

7. Are we finally seeing the bottom of the "black hole"?: Standardization of desktops has succeeded in reducing support costs. Colleges think they are getting more for their money with their IT expenditures. The norm for desktop replacement is at about three years.

Themes Starting to Appear but not yet at "Turning Point"

1. PDAs or handheld computers: In connection with wireless the handheld computers are the ultimate form of mobility for the student.

2. Hardening of the IT infrastructure: Redundancy and security are being recognized as of strategic importance.

3. Convergence of telecommunications and data: Voice over IP (telephones on the computer network) are beginning to appear.

4. New role of the CIO: The IT leader's job on campus is changing.

("Hot Issues 2001-2002 Making Headway," The Edutech Report, September 2001, Volume 17, Number 6, p.1,3,6-7)

EDUCAUSE has recently published their results on the "Top Campus IT Challenges for 2001." Please link to this article in
http://www.educause.edu/asp/doclib/abstract.asp?id=eqm01211

Ron Bleed