Information Technology Committee

April 10, 2025 - 11:00 a.m.

Virtual Microsoft Teams Meeting

Minutes

Opening

The meeting was called to order on April 10, 2025, at 11:00 a.m. by Mr. Matt Smith.

NOTE: Transcription was not started until halfway through the meeting. There may be some inaccuracies.

Attendees

Voting Members Present	Non-Voting Members Present
Dr. Jeannette Luna	Mr. Cody Bryant
Dr. Mohan Rao	Mr. David Hales
Dr. Lisa Zagumny	Mr. Will Hoffert
Dr. Jason Beach	Mr. Jason Luna
Dr. Julie Baker	Mr. Brian Seiler, CIO
Dr. Thomas Payne	Mr. Matt Silva
Mr. Matt Smith (Chair)	Ms. Angie Vick
Dr. Sandra Smith-Andrews	Mr. Tyler Farsoun
Mr. Dan Warren	Mr. Brandon Walls
Ms. Elizabeth Williams	Mr. John Woodard
	Mr. Hunter Kaller
	Mr. Allan Jones
	Mr. David Garrett
	Ms. Rebecca Gooch
Voting Members Absent	**Non-Voting Members Absent**
Dr. Curtis Armstrong	Mr. Greg Holt
Dr. Mike Reagle	
Dr. Kumar Yelamarthi	
Dr. Lenly Weathers	
Dr. Susan Wells	
Mr. Eric Brown	
Mr. Braxton Westbrook	
Mr. Harrison Simpson	

Approval of Agenda

A motion to approve the ITC Agenda was made by Dr. Julie Baker and seconded by Dr. Lisa Zagumny. Motion passed.

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting was made by Dr. Julie Baker and seconded by Dr. Lisa Zagumny. Motion passed.

FY26 ITC Membership Roster

Ms. Angie Vick provided a list of members whose terms were expiring on June 30, 2025, as follows:
Students: Mr. Braxton Westbrook and Mr. Harrison Simpson. The SGA President will provide recommendations for the student representative.
Dr. Curtis Armstrong (Faculty Member Role)
Dr. Jeannette Luna (Faculty Member Role)
Dr. Mohan Rao (Faculty Member Role)
Dr. Mike Reagle (Admin Student Service Role)
Dr. Kumar Yelamarthi (Faculty Member Role)
Dr. Lisa Zagumny (Academic Dean Role)

Ms. Angie Vick informed the committee that Dr. Lisa Zagumny has agreed to serve another term on the ITC committee, extending her appointment for three years. Ms. Vick requested recommendations for new members, which will be forwarded to President Oldham, who is responsible for selecting committee members.

Dr. Sandra Smith-Andrews announced her retirement at the end of July 2025 and indicated the need for a replacement for her membership role. Dr. Sandra Smith-Andrews suggested Dr. Eunsung Park as her successor and will confirm this recommendation via a separate email.

Mr. Matt Smith inquired about the deadline for submitting membership nominations. Ms. Angie Vick responded that she would like to receive all recommendations within the next two weeks to ensure the list is provided to the President's office before the end of April 2025.

Dr. Jeannette Luna mentioned reviewing the ITC Policy and Procedures and expressed a desire to discuss committee membership roles. She proposed that her lab manager be a potential committee member and requested that this be considered by the committee.

AI Discussion

Mr. Brian Seiler started by stating that the opportunities presented by Generative AI (GAI) have the potential to revolutionize teaching, research, and administrative functions within the university. However, there are notable challenges to address, including costs, security and privacy concerns, integration difficulties, the need for policy development, and the promotion of AI literacy. The strategic goal is to evaluate M365 Copilot and ChatGPT Enterprise for a potential university-wide implementation, leveraging existing investments in Microsoft infrastructure. Key decision factors include seamless integration with the Microsoft Office suite and other systems, compliance with data privacy and governance regulations (FERPA/GDPR), cost considerations encompassing licensing models and Total Cost of Ownership (TCO), the value these tools provide to students, faculty, researchers, and administrators, as well as the complexities involved in IT management, deployment, and support requirements.

Microsoft 365 Copilot is integrated deeply within various applications such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Teams, and Outlook, utilizing the user's data context via Microsoft Graph. Its functionality is centered on enhancing productivity, offering features like summarization, drafting, and data analysis, and it includes GitHub Copilot for verified students and teachers, with extensibility through Copilot Studio.

In contrast, ChatGPT Enterprise and Edu operate as standalone platforms, with Office integration requiring manual processes such as copy/pasting or file uploads or through APIs and third-party tools. This platform supports advanced content generation, extensive research, complex data analysis, coding, brainstorming, and the creation of custom GPTs for specific applications. Users have access to the latest OpenAI models, including GPT-4o and o1.

Both platforms ensure that enterprise customer data will not be used to train public models, offering encryption, SOC 2 compliance, and alignment with GDPR.

For M365 Copilot, it utilizes existing security frameworks and requires robust governance pre-deployment due to risks associated with user permissions. It is compliant with FERPA and HIPAA, provided that a Business Associate Agreement (BAA) is in place and offers extensive data residency choices.

Conversely, ChatGPT Enterprise / Edu functions within a distinct workspace, featuring its own administrative controls. Risks mainly arise from user actions rather than inherited permissions. This platform also supports HIPAA with a BAA and implies FERPA compliance for the education version. Data residency options are emerging, starting with Europe and expanding further.

The comparison between Copilot and ChatGPT highlights several key trade-offs. In terms of integration, Copilot offers seamless document integration, while ChatGPT provides broader API flexibility. Data access differs as well, with Copilot granting native access and ChatGPT allowing for a bring-your-own-data model. Cost-wise, Copilot presents a transparent pricing structure at $30 per user per month, whereas ChatGPT has a negotiated basis with potential high minimums. A noteworthy factor for the total cost of ownership is that Copilot requires eligible base licenses like A3/A5. Regarding security risks, Copilot inherits existing permissions, while ChatGPT allows for greater control through upload and integration options. Lastly, IT management differs from Copilot, enabling a unified administration experience, contrasted with ChatGPT’s separate OpenAI console and potential third-party add-ins.

The project is divided into two phases. Phase 1 involves a pilot program for targeted faculty and staff with a focus on enhancing productivity through M365 while prioritizing a review of data governance. Additionally, research will be conducted on the availability of a free version of GitHub Copilot for students and faculty. Phase 2 focuses on evaluating the potential of ChatGPT Edu/Enterprise through a limited pilot aimed at specific research cases that require standalone capabilities or extensive API integration, pending clear pricing and terms from OpenAI. The next steps include initiating a data governance and permissions audit for M365, defining pilot groups and success metrics for the Copilot, contacting OpenAI for definitive pricing and terms regarding ChatGPT Edu/Enterprise, and developing university-wide AI usage policies and training programs, which will be integrated into annual security training and CITL.

FY26 Departmental Lab Funding Concerns

The primary focus of the campus is to provide students with an optimal experience and access to technology in computer labs. This requires exploring methods for equipment replacement and sustainability, as well as considering alternative solutions and potential consolidation. Additionally, the campus must identify new funding models or sources, alongside establishing criteria for funding and equipment depreciation.

Effective communication and transparency regarding IT purchases have been prioritized since April 2024, following the President's request during a Budget Advisory Committee meeting. The IT Purchase Planning Dashboards, accessible to the President, Provost, Vice Presidents, Deans, and their Financial Associates, provide insights into faculty-staff computers, non-TAF-funded labs, student workstations, and other unit devices. These dashboards display estimated replacement costs and fund balances, with printed versions available for further distribution. Additionally, dashboard owners may grant access to others as needed. ACT Tier 2s and Lab administrators are proactively engaging with departments to address devices nearing end-of-service dates, indicating a lack of manufacturer support. To manage the rising costs of technology, the IT Replacement Fund Account has been established, allowing departments and colleges to save funds for technology replacement and renewal under defined circumstances. Dashboards can be found at: https://go.tntech.edu/itpurchaseplan.

Trends indicate that several departments are pursuing TAF funding for lab space replacements. The average estimated cost for a 30-station computer lab varies, with a PC lab at approximately $51,150 ($1,650 per device) and a Mac lab at about $62,000 ($2,000 per device), subject to changes based on software requirements. Previous proposals involved various projects such as the Library Testing Center and Cornerstone computer labs. Current proposals for this year include labs from CoIS (4 stations), NURS (72 stations), and CoAg&HE (31 stations). Additionally, there are plans for future labs in areas such as Bryan Fine Arts 223A and Foundation Hall 250B Art Lab.

To enhance student experiences and access to technology in computer labs, it is proposed to establish an ad-hoc committee responsible for addressing several key areas. This committee would focus on funding mechanisms for equipment renewal and replacement, criteria for lab eligibility for potential TAF funding, and exploring alternative funding sources for departments. Additionally, the committee would consider implementing rotation models among colleges, alternative solutions such as Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) strategies and virtual lab platforms, and conduct a strategic analysis of lab usage, availability, and student benefits. Opportunities for co-lab spaces shared between programs or colleges and an assessment of current lab utilization would also be fundamental to their mission.

In a recent discussion, Dr. Jeannette Luna expressed gratitude for the progress made in funding efforts for the lab. After learning they were ineligible for certain financial support, she approached the Dean for assistance, who then suggested applying to TAF. Dr. Jeannette Luna noted that a formal proposal would be forthcoming in a few years, as her current equipment is aging. Additionally, she raised concerns about the accuracy of dashboard data regarding devices on campus, attributing discrepancies to the high number of devices present, and suggested the need for a quality control measure to ensure data accuracy. She indicated her intention to further investigate the matter.

Mr. Will Hoffert said the maintenance of new items for the college representatives requires ongoing attention to ensure they are replaced as part of their natural cycle. While there are instances of delay, it is not acceptable for maintenance to fall behind for two years.

Dr. Jeanette Luna stated that she loves the dashboards and it is good news if she is told they already have a computer because that is one less cost. She continued by saying that it is nice to know that the computers are on a rotation and that there is money budgeted for items like the GIS lab and that it does not matter what bucket it comes out of. She expressed frustration regarding the frequent notifications about outdated computers and the ensuing difficulties in determining funding sources. She inquired if the team could potentially resolve this issue by discontinuing such communications. Dr. Jeannette Luna expressed confidence that the GIS lab would remain in operation, emphasizing the need to reserve hours for student work, rather than scheduling classes in that space. She also requested that this information be added to the relevant slide.

Mr. Will Hoffer acknowledged the importance of funding for computer labs across various departments, emphasizing the high costs involved. ITS strives for transparency and aims to facilitate yearly discussions to enhance understanding and address funding models, especially when current options are limited. The focus is on establishing sustainable funding rather than relying solely on one-time grants. ITS seeks ideas to improve student experience while identifying potential funding sources for departments. Despite the challenges, ITS believes the effort will ultimately benefit students and their educational experiences.

Dr. Julie Baker agreed with Dr. Lisa Zagumny on the potential for the spending committee to develop a forward-looking plan. She raised concerns regarding TAF funding, noting that the budget for projects has been limited to just over $100,000 this year. She questioned when the TAF fee for students was last increased and whether this is an issue that necessitates discussion. She inquired about the costs associated with reactivating engineering labs or classrooms and the impact on TAF funding, emphasizing the need for flexibility in budget allocation. Dr. Julie Baker highlighted the growing concern that available TAF dollars for projects are diminishing and seek clarity on financial sustainability as more labs are introduced. She acknowledged the need for additional resources but warned about the potential depletion of TAF funds.

Mr. Will Hoffert agreed and thinks that goes into defining the criteria for what would be considered for TAF to fund a lab. He continued by mentioning the balance between funding for laboratories and other projects, highlighting concerns about sustainability and resource allocation. It was acknowledged that the more resources allocated to lab technology, the less available for other initiatives. Suggestions are welcomed by the committee to address these challenges, especially considering the necessary transition from Windows 10 to Windows 11, which posed issues due to Microsoft's restrictions on certain devices. The need to maintain campus security while ensuring students had access to the latest technology was emphasized as a priority.

Mr. Matt Smith addressed questions from Dr. Julie Baker regarding the funding and fees associated with TAF. It was noted that TAF's funding had been raised four times since its inception, with the most recent increase occurring in 2019. The fees had been elevated from $112.50 to $130.00 per student per semester. He clarified that the TAF fee is part of the mandatory program service fees, which are regulated by THEC. The amount that can be raised in tuition and mandatory fees is capped, meaning that increases in one could limit the potential for increases in the other. He emphasized that stakeholders should be aware of these regulations as proposals for changes are considered, highlighting that it had been five years since the last fee increase.

Dr. Julie Baker thanked Mr. Matt Smith.

Dr. Jeannette Luna highlighted a discrepancy in financial figures over the past two years, noting that $2.5 million had been carried forward each year, leading to a total of $6 million available for spending. However, there is confusion over how only $100,000 remained to be spent, despite the significant funds available. Dr. Jeannette Luna acknowledged that contracts like the Microsoft agreement might be off-cycle but sought clarity on the apparent disconnect in the financial reporting.

Dr. Julie Baker acknowledged her involvement over the past two years and admitted that both the IT and Academic Affairs sides had encountered significant roadblocks that slowed down the process. She expressed curiosity regarding the amount of encumbered funds versus unspent carryforward funds, noting the complexity of the situation. Dr. Julie Baker highlighted that certain projects, like the greenhouse initiative, would span across three fiscal years and emphasized that delays in facilities and procurement contributed to these issues. She suggested that clarifying the status of encumbered funds could help convey that the organization was not simply holding onto unutilized money.

Dr. Jeannette Luna agreed by stating that it would be very helpful because then everyone would know if TAF funding needed to be raised or not. Currently, there is no room to argue that it needs to be raised if so much is carried forward.

Ms. Angie Vick stated in the carryforward for this year that $876,253.38 was already encumbered due to purchase orders generated for incomplete jobs. Additionally, funds from last year's approved projects, including the greenhouse funding, were carried forward and will need to be carried over partially into the next year. The total amount in the carryforward included nearly $900,000 from purchase orders and approximately $513,000 from last year's approved projects, resulting in a total carryforward of roughly $1.4 million.

Mr. Matt Smith suggested that a straightforward solution for managing TAF dollars would be to separate encumbered funds when reviewing budgets and year-to-date expenses. This approach would clarify what funds were genuinely unspent versus those that were still pending completion, thereby addressing most related inquiries.

Mr. Brian Seiler stated it was noted that the initial financial bubble resulted from the displacement of TAF funds by COVID funds, which significantly inflated the figures. It was emphasized that the previous $5,000,000 should not be regarded as a standard benchmark, as this was not representative of normal conditions. Additionally, there was a reference to past events and terminology, specifically concerning the term "cornerstone," which suggested a deeper historical context that predated the speaker's tenure.

Mr. Will Hoffert and Mr. Matt Smith both agreed with the statement.

Mr. Brian Seiler continued by stating university labs had previously not been included in updates funded by Taf. However, they are now covered, and the funds are being allocated to regularly update labs and classrooms to better support students, reflecting a significant improvement compared to the past.

Mr. Matt Smith requested additional discussion and proposed adjusting the representation of financial resources. He suggested making a clearer distinction between committed and encumbered funds to enhance understanding for all participants.

Ms. Angie Vick said in her report, it does have that. It has monies held for carry forward was $913,000. Carry forward for encumbrances rolling into FY25 was $876,000.

Mr. Matt Smith asked Ms. Angie Vick if she could repost the carry-forward information to bring it back to the top of the discussion on the ITC team discussion board so everybody could go back and review that information.

Ms. Angie Vick said she would.

Mr. Matt Smith asked for any additional discussion on this topic. Hearing no additional discussion, he began to move on to the next topic, other items for the next ITC meeting.

Other Items for the Next ITC Meeting

Dr. Jeanette Luna started the conversation by saying she had an item for the next meeting. She thinks a review of TAF at the next meeting and then a real in-depth discussion of whether this committee feels the fee should be changed is worth carrying forward to the next meeting.

Mr. Matt Smith asked Dr. Jeanette Luna if she wanted to make it an agenda item.

Dr. Julie Baker expressed the need for a group to evaluate the labs across campus, emphasizing that a decision had not been made regarding oversight. She suggested that if the spending committee was responsible, a meeting should be scheduled, but if not, clarification was needed on who would take on that responsibility.

Mr. Matt Smith brought up a significant point regarding the availability of $100,000 that was unallocated in the current year's budget. The discussion focused on strategies to reallocate funds for labs to ensure they could operate effectively. It became clear that simply utilizing the $100,000 would not suffice for this purpose. Participants needed to consider whether to recommend an increase in Taf funding or identify cuts in other areas to secure additional resources for labs. Additionally, the feasibility of various alternatives presented for lab operations was to be evaluated, particularly in terms of their acceptance by academic departments. Overall, two essential categories of questions emerged that required answers to address this funding challenge effectively.

Dr. Julie Baker asked if they were putting together a different committee to talk through that, or if they were talking about it at the next ITC meeting, or if they were talking about it at the spending committee.

Dr. Lisa Zagumny proposed that the spending committee should be convened to determine whether a certain issue required their attention or if it could be deferred. This would give them the opportunity to dig a little deeper.

Mr. Matt Smith requested Mr. Brian Seiler to arrange an additional meeting. He expressed a preference for scheduling it sooner rather than later, particularly during the current semester, for the spending subcommittee to discuss the relevant topic.

Mr. Brian Seiler proposed the possibility of creating or eliminating a subcommittee focused on the specific topic of the labs. He suggested that any such actions would need to originate from the President's office and indicated that a motion would be necessary to pursue this direction. Mr. Brian Seiler committed to investigating the matter further.

Mr. Matt Smith initiated a discussion about involving the spending subcommittee in Mr. Brian Seiler's investigation. He proposed gathering recommendations after conducting research aligned with the President's Office, ensuring the topic was included in future agendas for further discussion. Mr. Matt Smith also provided an update regarding security policies brought forth by Mr.

Jason Luna, mentioning they were scheduled for review by the university council next Wednesday, pending board approval. He then opened the floor for additional business, confirming a detailed review of the TAF budget for the next meeting. Mr. Matt Smith continued by saying some results of the spending committee from the subcommittee will be brought back and a small discussion will follow regarding the labs.

Dr. Thomas Payne discussed the need for a systematic approach to managing computer rotations and funding at the university level, as opposed to the current ad hoc methods. He highlighted the importance of addressing the challenges posed by the COVID-related funding shortfalls and emphasized the necessity of standardizing processes for facilitating computer rotations. Additionally, he pointed out that while some fees have remained unchanged for years, resulting in increased pressure on funding for technology within colleges, there has been no fee increase since the 2017-2018 academic year despite inflation concerns. Dr. Thomas Payne continued discussing the need for a more systematic approach to faculty computer rotations, emphasizing that additional costs had been incurred as they moved forward. He noted the importance of considering fee availability and other related aspects in this process.

Mr. Matt Smith said he has three agenda items now. The TAF budget financials, the lab renewals from the subcommittee, and faculty computer rotations replacements. He warns the next meeting will likely be longer than an hour to review everything. He asked Ms. Angie Vick if the next ITC meeting has a date yet.

Ms. Angie Vick said she does not have the next meeting set.

Mr. Matt Smith confirmed that Ms. Angie Vick would ensure the prompt posting of relevant materials on the team site. He acknowledged a message from Dr. Sandra Smith-Andrews and assured that the information would be disseminated once the meeting was scheduled. Mr. Matt Smith inquired whether there were any additional items for discussion in the next meeting and emphasized the importance of providing topics two to three weeks in advance to allow presenters to prepare adequately. He requested that any topics be emailed to either himself or Ms. Angie Vick for inclusion in the agenda. Concluding the meeting, he prompted for a motion to adjourn.

Adjournment

Mr. Matt Smith asked for a motion to adjourn at 12:07 PM. A motion to adjourn was made by Dr. Lisa Zagumny and seconded by Dr. Julie Baker. <u>Motion passed.</u>

Minutes prepared by Tyler Farsoun