The Committee on Information Technology met twice this academic year, on November 13, 2018, and March 21, 2019. At both of these meetings, the Chief Information Officer Noel Wong and selected representatives from Technology Services were present, and shared presentations on numerous IT activities taking place. What follows is a summary of the highest profile programs and issues we discussed.

**Faculty usage survey**

Information Technology, the Library, and the Provost’s office conducted a survey of faculty and researchers in order to understand their research needs. There were responses from 162 Faculty and Researchers and 102 Graduate Students. The results suggest that the primary concerns of our research community focus on centralized research data management, and an interest in the development of a collaborative platform. Many respondents focused on their need for easier access to software, and a platform to better understand the research landscape at Tulane to create the foundation for collaborative research efforts. Tulane Information Technology is working to find ways to address these issues more comprehensively. The survey team submitted a Request for Information (RFI) to software providers that may be able to help meet these key needs. In addition, some responses identified topics that can be addressed with tools and infrastructure currently available at Tulane. Technology Services is working to improve communication of what products and services are already available for members of the Tulane community.

The results from select questions are below.
2.4 Tulane should provide a mechanism for me to securely share my research data with researchers outside of Tulane University.

2.6 It would be useful to have a platform to collaborate with other Tulane researchers.
Big-picture exploration of technology needs: the Innovation Council

The Innovation Council is a volunteer group of faculty, staff and students interested in establishing a vision and strategy for incubating and driving innovation & technology at Tulane. The goal is to build a holistic view of the role innovation & technology play in the interplay between pedagogy, research and campus life and identify opportunities for strategic improvement in these areas across the institution. Currently we have divided into four working groups (The Role of the Educator, The Student Experience, Analytics and Active Learning). The groups will explore these concepts individually before meeting together at the end of the term to build a framework for future action. The first round of individual group meetings was held on 4/4 and the Innovative Learning Center team is in the process of turning those proceedings into workable pilot plans.

How do we assess the academic value of new technology products?

The IT Business Relationship Management (BRM) office will work to establish an IT Investment Council. The Investment Council will hear proposals for various projects and decide how to allocate and prioritize funds. The BRM Office will evaluate the benefits, values, and risk for each project and propose why projects should or should not go forward, with rankings. (Criteria may include the project’s alignment with university priorities, duration, level of difficulty, cost of software, equipment, or labor, etc.) The Investment Council will decide whether it wants to support the prioritization or change it. The membership on the Investment Council will be represented with leaders and chairs from both academic and administrative departments.

Tulane Self-Service Web Publishing Portal

In the fall, Information Technology will be launching a self-service web publishing platform. It is being billed as a “SquareSpace for Tulane.” The platform is being developed with a WordPress
backend for individuals to build and launch news websites. One would create content through one of several templates that will be developed with Tulane branding. The system will include a searchable and filterable site directory that displays key info and a thumbnail of published sites. Early fall is the target for a soft launch, with the goal of going live by December.

There are a host of governance concerns for this system: including, for example, how extensive and uniform Tulane branding will be (on both research and student-group pages); and whether and how faculty or staff sponsorship will be required for student group use. The IT Committee intends to visit this issue in the Fall semester and would like to engage with any other committees that are also interested.

**Moving from Digital Measures to Interfolio**

As announced by the provost in March, we have moved away from Digital Measures to Interfolio (Faculty180) for faculty activity reporting. There was a process of transporting data from DM to Interfolio so that old information was not lost and, wherever possible, some new information (like recent publications or grants) were automatically imported. The move went live as of March 25. Faculty will need to check the accuracy of the data, and likely remove duplicate information in some places. (The determination was made that it is easier to delete duplicates than it is to input new data.)

In the coming months, the Provost's Office will meet with the various schools individually to discuss how F180 can be adapted to suit the needs of the school. For example, the faculty annual report template from DM was also brought into F180 but can be changed so that each school's template is unique to that school. There no longer is a "one-size fits all" approach. IT will also be working to create data feeds with various systems on campus (Banner, HCM, Kuali, etc.) to automatically import data into a faculty member's profile, to try and reduce the administrative burden faculty have of manually inputting all data. (Some data will still require manual input.). One such data feed will include a web integration with the Tulane Sites project so that all faculty can have a public facing professional website that is automatically updated with information from F180. This will eliminate the need to maintain and update a web page—by updating F180, the faculty member will have also updated their web page.

**Cloud computing**

IT has spare general use compute capacity in the data center that will be offered up for use by faculty and students as a Tulane private cloud service. A self-service portal will be available to submit requests for access to virtual machines. In turn, unit leaders will need to approve each request for a predetermined period of time prior to provisioning the capacity. This will be supplemental compute capacity beyond the high-performance compute cluster which is currently used for highly parallel processing jobs running advanced application programs. The target period for launch is in Q3-4, 2019.

**High-performance computing**

Technology Services has engaged an external third-party consulting firm to profile the current workload of our HPC environment. Once the data is collected, they will engage a group of
Researchers who are the top consumers of the current HPC environment to project the workload for the next few years and the overall hardware processing needs. At the end of the exercise, Technology Services will determine a series of hardware purchases that will represent Tulane’s next generation HPC infrastructure. The timing of the purchases will be based on availability of capital funding over the next few years.

**Information security governance**

Research is becoming more and more “open source” and it is increasingly common that researchers would like to share data in coordination with publication of analysis of that data. In fact, some funding agencies now require this to be done. We also note that in the recent survey request by grad students and faculty for technology that supports the sharing of data within and outside the Tulane research community, was a headline result of the recent technology use survey. This impulse towards openness must be balanced with security and privacy concerns mandated by HIPAA and FERPA, for example. Moreover, explicit thought must be given to life cycle management for data. (Where and how long should it be available? When should it be sunset vs when should it be permanently maintained?)

Information Technology has hired a new Chief Information Security Officer, Rob Fink, to address some of these concerns. Faculty input in the development of procedures will be essential for identifying the diverse concerns that arise in different disciplines, while also applying pressure to make sure that any new procedures do not cause undue logistical burden on researchers.