



Peer Benchmarking

Over the past few months, some of our Central IT Leadership Team members (Shawn Baker, Dave Carpenter, Jason Huitt, Steve Lovaas, Kacie Reed, and Joe Volesky) have been working with me on a peer benchmarking and research initiative. This initiative is part of our efforts to create a new Division of IT and was designed to bring in outside ideas and perspectives that could complement our internal thoughts.

Our work focused on virtual site visits with 3 similar sized universities (Kansas State, University of Nebraska-System, and Oregon State) and research into national trends around “Digital Transformation”. The process was an informative one that provided many lessons learned as well as strengths and challenges that will help us as we create our division’s purpose, values, structure, and future strategic planning.



Why Peer Benchmarking?

Peer benchmarking is a process that many throughout higher education use to compare themselves to other institutions to gain new ideas, evaluate strengths and challenges, and learn about best practices. Our industry is unique in that universities freely share this information with each other. It’s common for universities to partner and collaborate with each other and peer benchmarking is no exception. This is very different from how the private sector operates and is a competitive advantage for us.



Peer benchmarking isn’t just something that should be done at the campus or divisional level, it can also create big results at the group/unit level. For example, it can help you establish relationships with peers, learn how others in similar technology domains solve for things, or to help evaluate vendors you may be considering.

What We Found

As our team went through this process, we learned how similar we were to these other institutions and how they were on similar journeys. In some cases, they had best practices to share with us, and in others we were the best practice and shared our strengths with them. Some of the key lessons learned were:

- *If our peers can transform their organizations, so can we.*
- *IT organizations can be positioned strategically through organizational charts, values, services, strategic plans, and objectives.*
- *Central IT can be transformative while engaging, involving, and not alienating Distributed IT.*
- *There were areas where we were aligned with our peers, areas where we had gaps, and others where we are ahead and leading.*
- *There is value in digital transformation: it entrenches IT as a trusted advisor from service provider*

While there is quite a bit of additional detail that we discovered in the bullet points above, we also identified key strengths/challenges from our peers that will be helpful for our team as we go through the coming months.

Informing Our Evolution

All of the institutions that we worked with had a new CIO (within the last 2 years), had undergone a reorganization effort, and had developed a strategic plan for IT at their campus or system. We learned how they approached their work, how they involved those inside and outside their division, and what worked or didn't in their journey.



As we look at our next steps, this information will be used in combination with upcoming divisional engagement opportunities designed to bring our employees voice into the process. We want to hear from all of you. What do you think are our strengths as a division? What areas do we need to look more critically at? You'll have seen invitations from a sub-group (Jamie McCue, Steve Juarez, and Dave Hoffman) that has been working with CSU Talent Development to design a process to capture your perspectives and ideas. While outside ideas are beneficial, they shouldn't be the only perspective. It's critical to our success that we include your perspective as a part of this process. To share your thoughts in this internal engagement process, sign up [here](#) before Wednesday, 10/7 at noon.

Learn More

If you'd like to know more about our Peer Benchmarking Initiative, we'll be hosting an open forum in the coming weeks where we'll be sharing more details about the work that we did, what we

learned, and how it will help inform the creation of our new division. Our hope is that you'll join us for this meaningful presentation and learn more about this work!

Take care,

-Brandon

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'Brandon'. The signature is stylized, starting with a large, bold letter 'B' that loops around, followed by a series of connected, fluid strokes that end in a horizontal line.