TO: OIT Staff  
FROM: WWD  
RE: Unit Review  

As you know, the Office of Information Technology was reviewed during the Fall semester by a university committee chaired by Dean Irwin Goldstein. The committee’s report was submitted to me on December 20, 2002, and continues to be reviewed by me and President Mote. I am writing now to provide you with an overview of the most significant findings in this report.

Following my charge, the committee organized its work to address three areas of interest, Campus Operations and Programs, External Interactions and Views, and OIT Structure and Organization. To carry out its mission, the committee utilized face to face interviews and extensive surveys. Among the individuals interviewed were the institutional Vice Presidents, senior managers in OIT, university business process owners, IT leaders from the University System, and IT leaders from the State and from other universities and organizations. All the University Deans were interviewed as a group, as was the Information Technology Advisory Committee (ITAC). Surveys or questionnaires were sent to OIT staff, to institutional technical staff and network administrators, to the college offices, to students, and to IT officers at selected national universities, both public and private.

Based on responses from all these sources, the committee reported the following conclusions:

I. Concerning Campus Operations and Programs

1. There is a belief among the senior leadership of the campus that the planning and priority setting process within OIT does not reflect their needs; that OIT does not project a clear vision of its mission and does not fully take account of campus priorities; and that there is too much focus on external relationships at a time when the internal structure is not operating as it should. There is significant discontent about the quantity and quality of support provided by OIT.

2. Business process owners varied in their level of satisfaction. Even among those whose partnerships with OIT had been productive and effective there was unhappiness expressed with the great effort required on their parts to sustain these partnerships and with a perceived poor level of communication. There was unhappiness about the aging infrastructure and lack of progress on critical needs and on planning for these needs. The process owners remarked on the absence of a coherent process through which to have needed projects initiated or completed. There was also a belief that interaction with OIT is hampered by the fact that responsibility for campus operations has not come with the needed authority to make the decisions and provide the resources that are required for these operations to go smoothly. Some expressed a perception that too much attention was being paid to external activities at the expense of needed internal support.

3. Groups designated to be advisory to OIT expressed the view that their advice was rarely sought, although some were appreciative of information that they received from OIT during periodic meetings. This supports the belief expressed in #1 and #2 above that campus priorities are not well reflected in OIT planning, as there are few formal ways for these priorities to be
surfed and incorporated in the planning efforts.

4. Students were reasonably satisfied with OIT services, although they described unmet needs (wants) such as for increased bandwidth and storage, enhanced phone services, and expanded wireless service and more access to computer labs. Students living off-campus are less well supported than those on campus. Many students were unaware of the resources available to them, suggesting that additional publicity for these resources would serve both OIT and the student body well.

5. Both within OIT and outside it, there is cautious agreement that the reorganization of administrative and academic computing is beginning to work and is having a positive effect.

II. Concerning External Interactions and Views

1. Representatives of external organizations such as Educause, IEEAF, and SURA were extremely positive about the leadership provided by Vice President Riley, especially as concerns MAX and other initiatives to bring high capacity data connectivity to users at the University, in Maryland, in the country, and in places throughout the world. They note that Maryland is once again a major player on the national scene.

2. IT professionals within the University System of Maryland (USM) expressed appreciation for the role the University is playing in the national networking arena, which brings expanded connectivity to all the institutions and credit to the USM as a whole. On the other hand, they view our institutional level of collaboration with other USM institutions as less than they would like overall, although citing some individuals within OIT who have proved to be particularly helpful to them.

3. Some IT professionals at USM institutions and elsewhere who felt sufficiently knowledgeable to comment remarked that outside networking the University seemed to be lagging behind in its on-campus services. Specifically mentioned were the absence of an Enterprise Resource System and a Portal.

4. The committee queried twelve prestigious universities about the levels and kinds of services offered to their students and staffs. Responses were received from Carnegie-Mellon, Johns Hopkins, UCLA, and the Universities of Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin. While it is hard to summarize the results, it is reasonably clear that, overall, we are well ahead of Hopkins and well behind Carnegie-Mellon. A somewhat careful look at those universities rather similar to us, Illinois, Minnesota, Michigan, Texas, Wisconsin, and UCLA, suggests that we are about average with respect to campus connectivity and electronic classrooms, low with respect to public ports and computers, at the bottom with respect to webmail, and near the bottom with respect to an integrated enterprise system.

III. OIT Structure and Organization

1. The new operating structures, both the combination of academic and administrative computing and the more recent reorganization, are considered by a small majority of OIT staff as
still a work in progress but generally positive and likely to result in improvements over the long run.

2. There was considerable variability among OIT staff in terms of job satisfaction. In the surveys, the non-supervisory personnel were most generally satisfied, supervisors somewhat satisfied, and senior managers very variable and quite concerned about a number of issues.

3. Among senior managers there was concern by some about a lack of coherent planning and strategic direction, and by many about an administrative structure where authority was not seen to be commensurate with responsibility and managers were often confronted with contradictory directions. Many senior managers expressed concern about the internal-external balance, and did not see the added value of external activities to the needs of internal customers.

There can be no question that this report describes some serious problems within OIT and in the relationships between OIT and the campus community. I fully believe that these problems do not arise because of fundamental flaws in the capabilities of OIT personnel or in their commitment to serving the community well, but rather in organizational issues and an unfortunate failure of communication. President Mote and I are working closely with OIT leadership and others to reorient the organization and to reestablish the connections that are essential to a healthy partnership.