

## **Annual Report: 00/01 Academic Year Special Assistant to the President for Information Technology**

**August 2001**

### **Summary:**

Bryn Mawr College initiated the development of a “distributed” information technology environment in 2000. The College’s goal is to provide up-to-date, comprehensive, integrated, and responsive information technology (IT) resources and support to all segments of the college community in an IT environment that encourages and sustains knowledgeable and responsible participation by faculty, staff, and students.

Four “user nodes” – Sciences & Math, Social Sciences & the GSSWSR, Arts & Humanities, and Administrative Services – represent the core of this distributed IT environment, with an advisory group providing overall planning and management guidance and facilitating college-wide IT implementation efforts. One of these nodes (Science & Math) was formed in the spring of 01. An advisory group was established in the fall of 00 and this group has provided IT leadership throughout the 00/01 academic year.

A Visiting Committee, appointed by the President and comprised of four distinguished representatives of peer institution academic computing and library services, conducted two site visits in the spring of 01. This Committee provided consultation in support of our efforts to develop a distributed IT environment, including recommendations on IT leadership issues. The Committee will conduct its last visit and issue a final report in the spring of 02.

Based on our experiences this past year, it is clear that an effective and efficient distributed IT environment, consistent with the goals and objectives of the College’s *Plan for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, requires:

- A thoughtful financial and human capital IT investment strategy that provides and sustains required IT resources and services.
- Active participation of faculty, staff, and students – including the development of requisite knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors needed to effectively embrace a distributed IT environment.
- IT leadership at the senior administrative level to advocate for required resources and to orchestrate the integrated development and delivery of the core services and support required by a distributed IT environment.

### **Selected Comments On Initiatives & Issues:**

This year the College undertook numerous actions to enhance IT staffing, facilities, equipment, and services. These initiatives are noted in the annual reports of various College offices and departments and will not be restated here. Below are selected comments on initiatives and issues directly related to our evolving distributed IT environment.

The Park (Science & Math) distributed IT node was established during the spring 01 semester and a Park steering committee now provides node leadership. Two Computing Services staff members were hired in 01 to support this node. Faculty at Park participated in the development of the two position descriptions and the interview process for each position—this participation represents the approach that will be used in the development of the remaining nodes. These two Computing Service staff members have workspace in the Collier Library and function as members of a Park computing and library resources team that works with the steering committee to support the Park IT node.

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The Social Science & the GSSWSR node held an initial organizational meeting in May 01 and will be established during the fall 01 semester. As currently envisioned, this node will be supported by the collaborative efforts of a yet to be hired Computing Services staff member who will provide data analysis software support and a designated social science librarian.

The Arts & Humanities node will be organized during the fall 01 semester. Computing and library IT support requirements need to be determined as part of this organizational process.

The Administrative Services node began its development during the summer 01.

A Senior Advisory Group for Information Technology (SAGIT) was established in 00. This group has provided overall IT planning and management guidance and facilitated a variety of college-wide IT initiatives. The SAGIT will continue to function in 01 as the College's senior IT planning and management group. In addition, a larger and more representative advisory group will be formed in 01. The goal of this group will be to provide participation in the planning process from each IT node, as well as student government participation. As currently envisioned, this group will meet periodically with the Provost, Treasurer, and the SAGIT to focus on macro-level IT operational issues and long term IT planning requirements. Ideally, the creation of this group will offer the opportunity to reduce at least one or two existing College committees.

This spring the SAGIT began the development of a number of IT policies for the College—including policies related to security, copyright, and web practices. These policies will be made available for general review & comment in September with the goal of their adoption later this year.

As noted in the Provost, Computing Services, and Library Annual Reports, a number of innovative and exciting instructional technology initiatives were initiated in 00/01. One initiative was a Tri-College IT summer camp funded by a Mellon Grant. Twenty students, including six from Bryn Mawr, received training in a variety of high level web based IT skills. During the current academic year this same grant will allow us to hire these six Bryn Mawr students (called *IT Student Associates*) in a variety of mentored computing and library positions designed to further their IT knowledge and skills. Ideally, the Tri-Colleges will find a mechanism to continue to fund this type of training & mentored employment program.

The College has launched a new web site. This is an exciting initiative and will lead to the further development and expansion of the web across and within the College's administrative services and academic departments and programs. Supporting and sustaining the College's evolving web presence, in the context of our new distributed IT environment, represents an immediate and serious challenge that will require thoughtful planning, everyone's patience and cooperation, and additional resources.

While the "demands" that seem to be associate with developing and sustaining a quality college IT environment seem never ending – the good news is that Bryn Mawr College is doing well—"the glass is half full." The approach we have chosen, a distributed IT environment, represents the right path to meet the challenges and opportunities inherent in our *Plan for the 21 Century*. As stated at the beginning of this report: we must now concentrate our efforts in the development of an investment strategy that will provide and sustain the IT resources and services needed to remain competitive with peer institutions, we must encourage the active participation of faculty, staff, and students in this evolving distributed IT environment, and we must have senior leadership to orchestrate the integrated development and delivery of the core services and support required by a distributed IT environment.

Submitted by: James A. Martin