ABSTRACT: Frequently we think of eLearning as either a distance learning or an IT strategy. However, a comprehensive, university-wide strategic plan is important to ensure all stakeholders and aspects are considered. At the University of Cincinnati (UC), the eLearning strategic plan was developed by a collaborative team consisting of faculty, instructional designers from different colleges and campuses, the Center for Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, and the Center for Excellence in eLearning. We will discuss why each of these areas is critical to university success and our approach to developing a robust and collaborative plan.

Excelling in eLearning is one of the five pillars of UC’s Third Century university plan. During a 9 month process the eLearning Strategic Planning Committee worked to build a large-scale, community-informed roadmap that impacts everything from electronic classroom design standards to college-level strategy for developing online program portfolios to how students interact with electronic course materials. As part of the process, the team reached out to faculty, students, and community partners to shape the values and outcomes of this process by providing feedback through surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

FRAMEWORK: UC’s collaborative approach to the strategic planning process is based on the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework. This framework describes the interaction and collaboration between the subject matter expert (faculty), IT-based services, and pedagogical-based services. It is this interaction and collaboration between these three domains that produces high quality, innovative eLearning results.

A campus-wide, collaborative team was brought together to help develop the strategic planning process at a half day retreat.

STRATEGIC DRIVER:
- UC’s Third Century plan identified eLearning as one of five strategic pillars and calls upon UC to further establish itself as one of the leading higher-education institutions by “Excelling at eLearning.”
- Greater than 90% of classes at UC already utilize some form of technology to enhance learning (e.g., Blackboard). Often referred to as hybrid classes, the majority of classes at UC fall into this category and represent the new “traditional” class.
- Currently, 17% of UC students are enrolled in a fully online program (~5,300 students).
- Today’s students bring an average of five mobile devices to campus.
- Canopy is UC’s innovative, collaborative and student-centered eLearning ecosystem that seeks to leverage the above trends. More than just a collection of technology tools through, Canopy is about supporting students and faculty in an “anytime, anywhere” climate, from face-to-face to fully online—particularly through the creation of partnerships that fuse pedagogy with technology to support 21st century teaching and learning.

The Strategic Planning Team held two working sessions where they commented on and edited Alignment Map “tablecloths.” Originally, they were supposed to be hung on the wall, but they were too big. The tablecloth approach worked really well—discovered by accident :-)

The Strategic Planning Team was formed.

Four working teams were formed to help focus the team’s efforts:
- Strategy & Vision
- Technology
- Data
- Communications

Based on existing university plans and industry documents, alignment maps were created to help ground the strategic planning process in the “what’s is” before defining the “what will be.”

Finalized Alignment Maps informed the creation of a campus-wide strategic planning survey.

A 10 question campus-wide survey was deployed. Over 1,200 responses were received in about 2 months.

Survey data was reflected back to the community through a series of focus groups to validate and refine the data.

Final report will be delivered April 2016.

Chris Edwards, MS Assistant Vice President for eLearning
Pat Reid, EdD Director of Instructional Innovation, Center for Excellence in eLearning
Paul Foster, Director of eLearning Technology & Analytics, Center for Excellence in eLearning
Bryan Smith, PhD, Director for the Center for Enhancement of Teaching & Learning

Canopy is UC’s innovative, collaborative and student-centered eLearning ecosystem that seeks to leverage the above trends. More than just a collection of technology tools through, Canopy is about supporting students and faculty in an “anytime, anywhere” climate, from face-to-face to fully online—particularly through the creation of partnerships that fuse pedagogy with technology to support 21st century teaching and learning.

Canopy is an ecosystem that supports teaching and learning.

Canopy.austin.edu
Major categories/themes weren’t predefined. They emerged as we began to organize the eLearning related items from existing reports. Major categories identified:

- Instructional Design/Pedagogy
- Investing in Faculty & Staff
- Student Engagement/Services
- Study Spaces
- The Business of eLearning
- Technology
- Analytics
- Accessibility

The red boxes along the center line represent sub-categories within major categories/themes. Used to further organize concepts within the major categories.

Existing eLearning related strategies, goals, and statements were pasted under each sub-category. In some cases items were placed in more than one sub-category. Icons were used to represent the source document or report.

Everything below the line (Current State) documents all current eLearning related strategies, goals, and statements. Icons represent source document.

The Strategy and Vision working group reviewed all major, university strategic documents looking for eLearning related strategies, goals, statements, etc. The group assigned icons to each major report for easy reference.

The Canopy leaf items above the line represent ideas, strategies, concepts, goals, etc. that emerged from the eLearning governance, project teams, community, or leadership. However, these items are not formally documented in any report.

Final Alignment Map data was used to inform the campus-wide eLearning Strategic Planning Survey. Over 1200 responses were received from a variety of constituent groups.