VISION FOR SFU INFORMATION SYSTEMS
Mark Roman, Chief Information Officer (CIO)

One I.S.
Our shared future for all IT at SFU requires unification of the vast and diverse array of people, processes, data, and technologies together into a seamless system. We are referring to this vision for all Information Systems (I.S.) at the University as One I.S. Creating One I.S. requires integration of our core administrative systems, development of a single integrated teaching & learning ecosystem, and implementation of a unified research computing environment.

Integrating our administrative systems requires development of interfaces linking our independent PeopleSoft system silos and developing tools to ensure they work together as a single system. It means creating a shared database capability to ensure the University makes decisions based on a single source of the data truth.

We will integrate our various teaching and learning tools onto a set of consistent platforms that are tightly integrated. By using a consistent information system architecture, we will provide the best support possible to the University’s teaching and learning mission.

Improving service to our researchers starts with unifying our research computing environment into an understandable collection of services that are consistent, easy to find, and well supported. Our strategic emphasis to be the preeminent leader in Canadian research computing demands exceptional effort from IT Services.

To achieve this vision, close cooperation and collaboration across all information systems providers throughout the University is required. This vision of unified information systems also requires significant internal improvements within the IT Services organization.

Strategic Priorities
To support this vision, IT Services is focusing on improving leadership, investing in people, strengthening customer service, implementing the new stewardship process, enhancing project management processes, creating a planning framework, improving our operational processes, creating an enterprise architecture, and measuring our performance.

Leadership
To support the evolving needs of the University, leadership skills in information systems need continuous improvement. IT Services is moving forward as a synchronized unit by strengthening our core and building bridges between the groups within our department to achieve the vision of One I.S.

People Investment
Information technology constantly changes, requiring information systems staff to constantly upgrade their skills. We are
investing in people and leveraging the vast educational resources of the University to maintain pace with new information systems innovations.

**Customer Service**

To improve our customers’ understanding of what we do and why we do it, we are enhancing our customer service by focusing on relationship management throughout the University. Spending more time with our customers socializing ideas will increase understanding of what we do, which ultimately increases trust in information systems and our organization. Better relationships lead to better communication, which naturally allows us to understand our customers better and allows us to improve the quality of service we deliver. It becomes a virtuous cycle.

**Stewardship**

A new stewardship process has been designed to engage our customers in making informed decisions about information systems. These decisions include setting priorities, approving all projects, ranking initiatives, reviewing process performance, assessing risk, and providing strategic planning guidance. The project management process is essential in supporting and informing the project decisions made by this stewardship process.

**Project Management**

To ensure the University’s investments in new initiatives are managed prudently, consistent project management processes are necessary throughout our department. We need to be rigorous about managing project schedules, budgets, and scope while balancing the risks and quality expectations of our customers. Every project will include a business case to explain why we need it, a project plan to define how we are going to implement it, regular reporting to monitor progress, change control to manage schedule, scope, budget updates, and formal closure processes.

**Planning**

The stewardship model provides the guidance to develop a planning process. The purpose of a formal planning process is to develop a long term strategic plan creating a set of goals aligned with the strategic mission of the University. This strategic plan includes measurable objectives needed to achieve those goals. The next step is implementing an annual planning process to define and measure our yearly initiatives and how these initiatives are linked into our strategic goals.

**Process Focus**

To continuously improve our operations, we need to continuously improve our operational processes. We are applying information systems best practices, particularly ITIL (Information Technology Infrastructure Library), to create well-documented industry-standard processes. Initiatives such as a change advisory board will be implemented to reduce our risk, improve our service, and increase our value to our customers.

**Enterprise Architecture**

Development of formal enterprise architecture will help advise planning and future decision making for information systems. It will also inform development of key information systems initiatives by defining data models, applications systems, and computing platforms. Stewardship of information systems needs this roadmap to help leaders understand how all the components fit together and how they will work together in the future. Planning processes need the enterprise architecture as a baseline for understanding what has to be done.

**Metrics**

We are introducing monthly status reports with the intention of delivering on two key benefits. First, we will share what we do with the University. Everyone will be aware of what everyone else is doing, which will improve cooperation and coordination across the organization. Second, these reports will begin to report on performance metrics. By measuring what we do for the University, we help the rest of the University understand where we are spending their money.
Summary
All of the above changes will inevitably lead to University-wide cultural changes in information systems. Greater engagement of the University in our decision making processes, more focus on relationship management, long term systems plans, and increased integration of information system architectures all lead to a unified and integrated approach towards information systems across the entire institution. The diagram below is intended to bring all these ideas together.