

UC Computing Services Conference (UCCSC)

CIO Tom Andriola - Opening Remarks

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UC San Francisco

First, I'd like to start off saying how excited I am for my first UCCSC - to be here today at this amazing conference, and to represent our function at the University and the more than 7000 professionals who play a role in IT. Let that sink in for a second - 7000. I'm also proud to be a part of an amazing institution making a difference in the lives of students, caring for our country's sickest patients, and conducting ground breaking research on our toughest societal problems.

My father often says that with every challenge in life also comes opportunity. And today, I will talk about the challenges facing the University of California, but also speak to the opportunities and transformative role we as IT professionals can play in support of the University's mission.

The challenges are well-documented, whether we are speaking of diminishing state financial support, public outcry to maintain affordable college costs, an increasingly competitive research enterprise, or dramatic changes in health care brought on by the Affordable Care Act.

But, as has been the case in many industry inflection points, "size, scale, and innovation" carry the day. And all these elements work in our favor at UC. Our size and scale is unmatched in terms of capability, brilliance, and ideas. And given the always evolving field of technology, our roles as IT professionals are expanding. If you have any doubt, we have to go no further than the induction speech of new UCSF Chancellor Sam Hawgood, who said at last month's Regents meeting that the evolution of his university is being driven by the "convergence of technological, biological and global population science organized into large integrated knowledge networks." Now this is a statement we as IT people can understand - technological, knowledge, networks. Throw in a bit of big data and a cloud, and we have a royal flush.

Chancellor Hawgood's comments were related to health care, but I would subscribe that every aspect of the University is undergoing advances due to technology. For example

- Wearable technology will soon transform what we can do for campus safety and security.
- Field sensors linked to high speed wireless networks are now aggregating data from agricultural fields to be crunched on supercomputers, feeding back water and nutrient plans to farmers in the Central Valley.
- Want an example of digital health care? How about glucose monitoring by your contact lenses?
- Carnegie Mellon's recent advances with "intelligent tutors."
- And my new favorite - the network as an instrument of discovery that I saw last week in the field of geology - through sensor-based data collection, network enabled software, and augmented 3D reality to show the researcher what she cannot see.

So our work is more relevant than it has ever been. We have teams that do the mundane and the amazing. As I have traveled around the UC system during my first 10 months, spending much of my time visiting with faculty, researchers, clinicians, and sometimes even with

students, I continue to be amazed how much innovation we generate across the system with our 7000 professionals. When I spoke to the Regents in March, I referenced my observations, describing them as "a culture of local technology innovation" and cited several examples of streamlining costs, supporting student success, and enhancing patient care. During this week you will interact with your peers, hear about some of these successes, and get a glimpse of what I get to see.

But I also said to the Regents that too often I saw innovation stay local and miss the opportunity to build on success and leverage our investments for greater good. Too often we go about our work - thinking only of our own department, school or campus, and missing the broader opportunity to share and collaborate. And so I will ask here, like I did at the Regents' meeting, "given our challenges, can we afford to miss these opportunities?"

The CIOs across the system and I all agree we cannot. And so, the IT Leadership Council worked together to develop a collaboration framework outlining the principles for how we work together. But memos and word documents from the top never are enough to bring about substantial change. The most profound changes are the ones that combine inspired leadership with grassroots movements. Today I'd like to urge you to start that grassroots movement for the University of California and our IT community.

True collaboration requires both the desire and the ability to connect with others of like mind, or "birds of a feather," as we like to say. Since I've been at the University, I've invested in creating several meetings where birds-of-a-feather get together. In every case, people tell me the interactions were very valuable and we should do more of these. But one thing I know about that model - it doesn't scale. Jim Collins, author of the books "Good-to-Great" and "Great-by-Choice," so eloquently said innovation by itself did not create great organizations. The truly great ones sustained their greatness by bringing their innovations to scale.

So my challenge to the group is - how do we bring our innovations to scale? How do we leverage the power of 7000 talented and experienced IT professionals? How do we build a community, a University of California IT community, that doesn't just support the mission but transforms it?

I believe the DESIRE to work together exists in our system. I believe what we lack is the ABILITY to collaborate, share, and learn from each another. Listserv is not the 2014 tool of choice. This is where YOU come in. This is where YOUR VOICE needs to lead.

If you think we need a platform to connect people and ideas, send me an email. If you want a place to share knowledge and experiences, and connect the feathered birds, tweet me @Andriola_UC. If you have ideas on how to unleash the power of 7000, write to my blog. Describe what the platform needs to do and what you would use it for. And if a birds-of-a-feather group wants to get started now, tackle me before I leave here tomorrow.

I put this challenge out there because I believe it will transform the University and our role. I believe so strongly in this idea that if the grassroots voice is loud enough, I will fund it for everyone. This opportunity is now in your hands - where it should be, in the hands of those who serve the mission.

Today I speak to 300 of you, or 4% of our total IT community. Let me paint it another way - for every one of you here, there are 24 other "you's," with your talent and experience, working at a UC location. What if you could leverage the power of that experience on your next project? What if you could get a question answered in an instant by finding the UC expert? How much more productive could you be? How much more could you transform the mission? How much better could you feel about making a difference?

Finally, I want you to enjoy this event. Use it to expand your network, use it to discuss my challenge, and use it to celebrate working for the greatest public university system in the world. I thank you for the chance to speak today and the future we'll transform together.