

ILLINOIS INSTITUTE
OF TECHNOLOGY

Many Voices, One Vision

Strategic Planning Steering Committee:
Final Recommendations
November 15, 2008

**STEERING COMMITTEE
CHARGE**



Memo

Date: September 10, 2008

To: Steering Committee Co-Chairs, Christopher White and John P. Collins

From: John L. Anderson, President

Subject: Report due November 15, 2008

First, let me thank you for your time, patience, questioning and probing. The process has forced all of us to think deeply about IIT - our strengths and weaknesses, our goals, our commitment. Your many contributions, as well as those of your colleagues amongst the faculty, staff, students, and trustees, have been invaluable as I think about the direction of the university and work with you to craft our strategic direction.

The main charge to the steering committee was to "...provide recommendations to the President for strategies that will achieve the vision." The Vision for IIT that I have presented to you is:

IIT will be internationally recognized in distinctive areas of education and research, using as its platform the global city of Chicago, driven by a focus on professional and technology-oriented education, and based on a culture of innovation that embraces bold and transformational ideas.

Put another way, I am looking for ideas and initiatives that will lead IIT to a quantum jump in its place among the elite institutions of higher education, not just an incremental increase in reputation. By "jump in its place," I am not referring to rankings, though a better ranking will follow. Instead, what I mean is that IIT will be the third major national/international university in Chicago, along with UC and Northwestern – different than these two institutions but mentioned in the same breath.

To meet this goal and achieve our vision, we need to not only advance our core areas, where we currently have comparative strengths, but also create an environment that embraces new, bold ideas and promotes a culture of innovation. To address these needs, I have outlined in the attached concept paper two parallel structures to be built out as fundamental elements of the strategic plan. My request to the Steering Committee is that you use this document as the boundaries within which you will craft a



report by November 15 containing your recommendations on a) how to build on our core areas and b) criteria for making investments in what I am calling the “Innovation Sandbox.” Your report should address the following points:

1. Focusing on advancing IIT through our core, list and briefly describe 3-5 promising avenues for investment in our current activities, realizing that many can be combined into one initiative and new developments will require revision of each initiative on an annual basis.
2. Comment on the innovation sandbox – criteria for playing in it, guidelines for time allowed in it, development of resources to promote activities, processes for advancing the sandbox ideas to semi-core status.
3. What are the 4-6 most interesting ideas you heard from the “many voices” and from your committee deliberations? In formulating this list, do not worry about the investment triangle, budget constraints, etc. This is your wish list.
4. Develop specific thoughts on addressing core university improvement areas which will be essential in supporting any programmatic initiatives

Please note that I plan to distribute your report to the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees. Also, keep in mind that the strategic plan is the guide to achieving our vision, so please keep the vision statement in mind as you proceed.

Again, I thank you for your time and service. You have contributed much to the future of IIT.

A colleague of mine said “Change is good; you go first.” We will take the chance and go first.



JLA 9/10/08

Innovation in a Technology Oriented University: IIT as an Innovative Studio

Vision

IIT will be internationally recognized in distinctive areas of education and research, using as its platform the global city of Chicago, driven by a focus on professional and technology-oriented education, and based on a culture of innovation that embraces bold and transformational ideas.

Challenge

To gain national and international recognition and visibility, IIT must look beyond its traditional approaches in education and research and create an *environment* that promotes creativity and innovative thinking. Our students and faculty must be prepared to excel and become leaders of technology and the professions in a world constantly undergoing *unforeseeable* change. IIT must strive for a model of what a professional/technical university is – call it “University 2.0”. Can IIT develop a new model for the university that will be adopted in whole or in part by other universities?

To meet this challenge, I propose two parallel approaches to the strategic plan. The first is a focus on improvement by bolstering our core areas. This approach is least abstract because it aligns with current strengths and involves the re-configuration of our current activities, with requisite investment of resources. Investments made in initiatives involving the core areas must satisfy the “investment triangle” – the initiative must promise to 1) raise the visibility of IIT, 2) offer a reasonable plan for financial sustainability, including identification of a champion for the initiative, and 3) promote synergy among different areas of the university so as to advance multiple disciplines. The investment triangle will be the metric rule for evaluating ideas now and in the future.

The second approach, parallel to the first, is development of an “innovation sandbox” – an *environment free from the constraints of discipline-oriented resource allocations* – where new and innovative ideas and programs can be incubated. Administration of the Innovation Sandbox will live with the offices of the President and Provost and open for application by all members of the IIT Community.

These two approaches overcome the two major hurdles facing strategic planners: first, the issue of turf and self-interest and the difficulty we all have in relinquishing some of it; and second, the enormous barriers blocking new ideas that emanate from strong, established programs. The first approach, selectively advancing our core, addresses the first hurdle, while the second approach, the innovation sandbox, addresses the second.

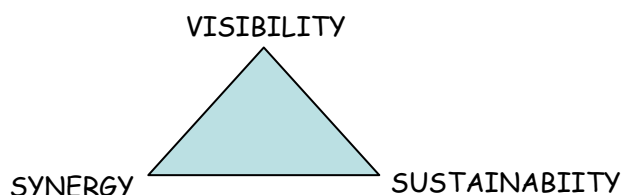


Building on the Core

The guiding principles of a university include:

1. Offer a sufficiently broad menu of educational programs to meet the expected needs of the students we recruit.
2. Invest in research and other creative endeavors in a strategic way to bring distinction and recognition to the university and advance the educational programs.

The investment of resources in core areas, where we currently have some comparative advantage, should be in line with these principles, especially the second one, and should satisfy three criteria which we call the “investment triangle”:



1. VISIBILITY:

- Does the area of investment have the promise to bring attention to IIT?
- Is the area’s national and international “footprint” sufficiently large enough to cast a positive glow over other parts of the university?

2. SUSTAINABILITY:

- Are there external financial resources to sustain the the area of investment?
- Will the investment position IIT to compete for external resources from new sources?
- Will the area attract students and faculty to IIT, and will the ideas capture the imagination of those who control outside resources?

3. SYNERGY:

- Is the area of investment sufficiently interdisciplinary to positively impact other areas at the university?
- Will the investment yield dividends in other areas?

The “Many Voices, One Vision” strategic planning process has a focus on expanding our core and strengthening the university foundation. The recommendations related to what areas to support with more resources must be justified using the investment triangle.



Innovation Sandbox

The development of the Innovation Sandbox comes from my observation that new ideas often face resistance by well established core areas. To be a vibrant and healthy institution, both sides must be protected and nurtured, but core areas change over time. The new ideas provide that change.

I envision an innovation sandbox at IIT, with the outer boundary being the University boundary – administrative, not geographic. A sandbox is a play area without internal borders. Within the outer boundary teams and structures form, disappear and re-form over various time periods. Creativity is emphasized. Good ideas naturally attract the attention of players and spectators. Can IIT be a sandbox of innovation?

An integral part of IIT's culture is its Bauhaus legacy—one committed to innovation and a commitment to pushing the limits of our technology in order to solve real-world problems. Continuous learning, hard work and a pure passion for problem solving through curiosity and discovery are keys to this idea of innovation. We need to harness these past notions of innovation and ignore all of our pre-standing ideas of boundaries in order to create this sandbox of innovation.

A key guiding principle is the emphasis on new ideas and their development without discipline boundaries. This means the sandbox is the play area of the faculty, students and perhaps the community. Oversight is the responsibility of the Provost. Connections to all our colleges and other academic units are desired but informal. The vetting of good ideas follows a less rigorous form of the investment triangle. In essence, the university will provide “seed resources” for promising new ideas to help them compete with initiatives from core areas. If an idea proves especially fruitful, it joins the core areas as a candidate for larger scale investment.

The strategic plan will include recommendations for processes that establish and administer the innovation sandbox.



STRATEGIC PLANNING STEERING COMMITTEE

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STEERING COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR REPORT

Overview:

President Anderson launched the Many Voices, One Vision planning effort by calling for a diversity of voices to contribute ideas and strategies for shaping IIT's future. As important as any single outcome, was the emphasis placed on actively involving the IIT community in shaping a new vision of the university.

The Many Voices Steering Committee was formed for the purpose of soliciting ideas from a broad swath of the IIT community, refining this input into recommendations to President Anderson, and keeping the larger IIT community informed of its work.

The Steering Committee included 27 dedicated individuals representing all IIT campuses, faculty, staff, students, trustees and alumni. This report is the result of seven months of their labor gathering and analyzing a wide variety of data about IIT's relative strengths, and opportunities for building on that core.

The recommendations that follow are derived from that collective effort. We firmly believe that such endeavors reveal one of IIT's greatest strengths; the ingenuity, visionary leadership, and practical-mindedness of its faculty, staff, and students.

Report format:

Strategic planning requires an honest assessment of current strengths along with a vision for distinguishing ourselves in an uncertain future. In our report, we identified three central themes: education; building the core; and culture, team and operations. We begin by summarizing our broad vision and recommendations in each of these areas. In these summaries, we synthesis the ideas and findings of the Steering Committee, creating a coherent framework within which the work of the four subcommittees can be better understood.

Education

The Illinois Institute of Technology is first and foremost an institution that provides a high-quality education to its students, preparing them for the modern world. The world in which we live is constantly changing. To meet the ever changing needs of our students we must remain nimble and flexible in the ways and methods used to deliver that education.

Committee deliberations, external research, and subcommittee activities all confirmed the central importance of providing a meaningful high-quality education to all of our



students. It is therefore widely held that we can and should distinguish ourselves internationally through our distinctive academic programs. When implemented in 1995, IPROs brought distinction and national recognition to IIT. The past decade has taught us many things and we are now ready to move forward with the next generation of inter-professional education, and in so doing, build our international reputation.

The broad vision for the future of interdisciplinary education rests in making connections between like-minded students and faculty within the IIT community independent of department and college boundaries. The institution can establish “houses”, both virtual and real, centered on solving the world’s problems. Students will affiliate themselves in varying degrees to meet their individual interests and needs starting their first year. As students develop their skills and knowledge, they will advance within the house, assuming ever-increasing responsibilities and leadership roles. Interdisciplinary education begins on day one and does not end until graduation. This structure more closely mimics how organizations arrange themselves when solving problems, commercial or not. It also fosters leadership and mentoring skills in our 3rd and 4th year students.

Accomplishing this vision will require us to minimize historical disciplinary boundaries and other barriers to collaboration. The academic organization must be restructured to allow for appropriate resource allocation. We will be challenged to create an environment across the University where people are free to cooperate and collaborate (as opposed to competing). New methods of communicating across the institution will be needed to make critical connections. A starting point could be a student laboratory free from existing organizational structures open to all for creative, constructive exploration, a place where students can prototype and test ideas

We have an opportunity to capitalize on and leverage our connections within Chicago. As stated in the Blue Ocean subcommittee report, we should use “the City of Chicago as a living educational and research lab”. Another option is to offer projects featuring and focusing on “urban experiences”. In so doing, we foster partnerships with a variety of communities, schools, and civic organizations through which we attract, recruit, and educate a genuinely diverse student body. Students have shown great enthusiasm for addressing real-world problems.

The subcommittee reports that follow address these issues in more detail and provide specific suggestions and recommendations. These should be considered a starting point for further discussions. A campus wide process lead by the Provost could be initiated to further investigate this vision. We recommend that IIT build on our decade-long experience with inter-professional education by updating our existing IPRO program creating a truly transformational, distinctive, and revolutionary strategy for educating students. We also recommend that increasing the diversity of our student body be a key element in all planning processes. As our student population diversifies, we must also provide them adequate faculty and staff mentors and role models.

These ideas represent a fresh approach to undergraduate education and have the potential to transform IIT; however, the bulk of courses taught more than likely will



remain “traditional” in nature. True transformation, however, can only take place after we reform course instruction. We do not advocate a revision in course or curriculum content, only a modernization of in-class teaching style and techniques. The days of passive learning have passed and we need to be on the leading edge of developing an active learning environment within all our courses.

Building the Core

To gain national and international recognition and visibility, IIT must look beyond its traditional approaches in education and research and create an environment that promotes creativity and innovative thinking. Our students and faculty must be prepared to excel and become leaders of technology and the professions in a world constantly undergoing unforeseeable change.

John Anderson

This is our challenge. To accomplish our common goal, we must invest in our core strengths while also creating an environment that allows for continuous development of new core strengths. The key to our success rests with people. The faculty, staff, and students of IIT will ultimately determine whether this strategic process is a success or failure. It is also understood that a comprehensive vision for the future is not achievable within a singular planning process. While identifying existing strengths that we believe are poised to enhance IIT’s international reputation, we also recommend a new framework (the Innovation Sandbox) from which transformational ideas will emerge.

Core strengths are those that touch all branches of the institution. They are by definition multidisciplinary and synergistic in nature and design. We have identified two programs immediately capable of bringing together faculty, staff, and students from all corners of the institution to help solve problems for the real world. These broad programs (discussed in detail within the Strengthening the Core subcommittee report) are health and life sciences, and energy and sustainability. We recommend that the University elevate and strengthen the Pritzker and Wanger Institutes. IIT will not be alone in promoting these fields of research. Leadership with a shared commitment to inclusion as well as the whole will be key to the success of these endeavors. It is imperative that these organizations work quickly to break down historical academic boundaries. They must also play a leading role in the development of next generation interdisciplinary education. All who choose to work within these programs must be challenged to think creatively and dynamically. We recommend that sufficient resources (both capital and human) be provided to create the capacity to dream big dreams, and that the Institutes form partnerships that extend beyond the current University boundaries.

It is difficult to plan for an “unforeseeable future”. The best we can do is to create a culture of innovation and a space that facilitates communication and connections. This is our Innovation Sandbox. Just as the tide sweeps away the day’s work on a beach, the IIT Innovation Sandbox will be continually refreshed and renewed. It will be a place of collaboration and transformation free from existing academic structures or thinking. It



will be a place where IIT's best and brightest are given permission to explore boundaries while also inventing new ones. The Sandbox is not a place to park ideas or people, but a place to create and grow ideas, a place in which new threads and connections are established. It is the place where our Core meets the Blue Ocean.

Blue Oceans refers to new ideas and opportunities that have significant potential to transform and distinguish the institution. One example is the developing partnership between the City of Chicago and IIT. We should explore and leverage this partnership to the greatest possible extent. For example, one piece of the IIT core could someday be summarized as "Solving the World's Problems Starting in Our Own Backyard". Another possibility is comprehensive problem solving or applied problem solving, where IIT examines an issue holistically and capitalizes on our eclectic set of colleges to form unique partnerships rarely seen in an academic setting. The key will be to "keep it fresh". These ideas and development of future Blue Oceans will not succeed if after a few years the Innovation Sandbox reverts to a traditional incubator.

Culture, Team and Operations

To be successful in programmatic areas of emphasis, we require a People Culture which values and respects: diversity; skills and contributions of individuals; the necessity for teamwork and helping others; and the essential role of effective and efficient operations.

The findings of the Supporting the Core Subcommittee, Student Input, and the consensus of the Steering Committee membership, all strongly recommend a focus on the university culture, team and operations. Although there are many examples of excellent relationships between students, faculty and staff and good customer support systems, significant overall improvements are needed.

IIT People Culture

We can only reach the strategic vision by having an IIT People Culture. The attributes of this culture will evolve but must embrace success, pride, and respect for the diversity, skills and contributions of individuals, teamwork, accountability, responsibility, honesty, open communications and transparency.

A strong pervasive culture will be developed by behaviors which evolve into the growth of shared values leading to a stronger whole. Values will anchor the way the university treats individuals, responds to challenges and develops opportunities. A robust IIT People Culture will provide the human foundation for the university to achieve its strategic vision.



Team

To instill our People Culture we must inspire, communicate, and create a unity of shared vision and importance of purpose across the university. Positive supportive leadership, at all levels, at all times, will be required. An attitude of success, pride, creativity, innovation and collaboration will replace negative attitudes. Excellent students, faculty, staff, supporters and partners will want to join and hate to leave the team.

Critical to developing a strong effective team is an understanding of and continual focus on the university vision. Effective communications will ensure an understanding of the importance of the vision and the individual role in contributing to success. Each individual will have an understanding of and take pride in the accomplishments and goals of IIT.

Diversity will contribute to reaching the highest levels of performance. Faculty and staff diversity will complement and support our global vision and the wonderfully diverse student body. Throughout, there will be respect for individuals and university organizations. The development of individual and team skills will be emphasized.

The team will create an environment that fosters compassion, thoughtfulness and care. Cooperative supportive relationships will be developed between individuals and organizations. Effective communications and interactions will promote creativity, innovation, collaboration and solutions. Together, will take positive actions to address problems and improve processes. As a team, we will celebrate successes.

Support Operations

Dozens of administrative and operational processes are essential to the daily business of our university and the lives and success of students, faculty and staff. To achieve the strategic vision these must be effective and efficient processes which set and exemplify “best practices”. Positive supportive relationships of faculty, students, staff, supporters and providers will facilitate highly motivated, effective and efficient support operations. Qualities essential to effective and efficient support operations are:

- Open communications and cooperation
- A focus on providing superior service to our customer- the student
- Responsibility and accountability
- Clear, effective and understood policies and procedures
- Objective standards and continuous assessment using metrics to reflect operational performance



- Continual process improvement driven by a partnership of customers, service providers and leadership.
- A work environment that produces solutions through creativity, innovation, collegial goodwill and respect
- Systematic selection of people who possess the values, motives, and skills that fit our culture and job requirements.
- Training, performance assessment and development of the individual
- Incentives to recognize and celebrate excellence

Conclusion

Guided by our vision of “*IIT as internationally recognized in distinctive areas of education and research*”, the Many Voices, One Vision Steering Committee reached out to the entire IIT Community for input and guidance on how best to shape IIT’s future. In each of the three central areas we examined – education; building the core; and culture, team and operations – there were areas in need of improvement, but also great strengths.

We recommend developing more active learning environments that cut across disciplines and departments where students and faculty alike are free to cooperate and collaborate.

By investing in our core strengths we strengthen an environment where our best and brightest can propel a culture of innovation that sweeps across the entire university. Nurturing new strengths through the Innovation Sandbox not only empowers that goal, but provides a generator to continuously recharge the innovative spirits of the entire IIT community.

Finally, our Steering Committee recommends that IIT concentrate on an IIT People Culture, developing the university team and improving support operations.



Strengthening the Core

The Strengthening the Core Subcommittee focused on promising avenues for advancing IIT through investment in core education, research, and a range of other initiatives.

The Subcommittee believes that a major investment in an IPRO Enterprise program has the potential to thrust the IIT undergraduate experience into national prominence. IPRO Enterprise is a reinvention of the current interdisciplinary IPRO program that would allow students to participate in basic research, community service, or profitable products/services.

The tremendous benefit of an IPRO Enterprise is that students would be involved with these projects continuously throughout their undergraduate careers. Enterprises would be ongoing entities with specific areas of focus (e.g., aerospace, medical diagnostics, software engineering, physical sciences) to facilitate project-based learning. The Subcommittee also recommends the creation of a workspace called an IdeaBarn to serve as a tech park incubator for the Enterprises.

IPRO Enterprise would significantly differentiate IIT from other institutions. Successful Enterprises would also have the potential for drawing positive attention to the university while enriching the educational experience of each participant.

Similarly, significant investment in current research initiatives could have a tremendous impact. Both the Pritzker Institute of Biomedical Science and Engineering and Wanger Institute for Sustainable Energy Research have significant momentum at IIT. Both represent promising research areas for a large collection of faculty in a variety of academic units.

Research at the interface of technology and biomedical science has emerged organically as one of IIT's greatest areas of strength and momentum. With the Pritzker Institute, IIT has a ready-made framework on which to expand and enhance this critical and timely activity. The Wanger Institute represents a timely response to immediate global energy and environmental challenges. Ralph Wagner envisioned it best when he said that, "Energy challenges will be a dominant problem for many decades...and IIT can become a leader in sustainable energy."

The Subcommittee also compiled a lengthy list of both broad initiatives that would benefit all academic units, and narrow initiatives that were focused on promising research disciplines that would benefit several academic units. These ideas were deemed worthy of future consideration and are included in the full Subcommittee report.

The Strengthening the Core Subcommittee responded to the following challenge:

Focusing on advancing IIT through our core, list and briefly describe 3-5 promising avenues for investment in our current activities, realizing that many can be combined into one initiative and new development will require revision of each initiative on an annual basis.

Members of Strengthening the Core Subcommittee:

*Raymond Ballard
Britt Burton Freeman
Alex Flueck
Warren Schmaus
Mary Rose Strubbe
David Venerus
Bud Wendorf
Miles Wernick*



Core Support

The Core Support Subcommittee addressed the challenge of university operations and culture. Achieving the lofty aspirations enumerated in the Many Voices vision statement - creating an internationally recognized university with a culture of innovation that embraces bold ideas - will require an equally capable institutional and administrative core.

Subcommittee members contacted many faculty, staff, and students. They concluded that the fundamentals of the institution were very strong, but were impeded by a variety of organizational and systemic factors. Their recommendations focused on “creating a work environment in which innovation, collegial good-will and respect are reinforced...leading to a stronger and more successful institution.”

Principally, the Core Support Subcommittee recommends a great emphasis be placed on transforming the institutional attitude from scarcity to success. Competition for resources has diminished the high-level of mutual assistance required to build a highly motivated and efficient support structure for teaching and research

To reverse this scarcity mentality, the Subcommittee recommends “leadership by example” that fosters the professional adoption of the principles of Honesty, Efficiency, Accountability, Responsibility and Transparency (HEART) at all levels of the institution.

Their other recommendations focus on procedures and practices to strengthen administrative support and access across the university to accurate and timely information. Specifically they recommend the creation of a customer-service focused “help” center to facilitate the dissemination of accurate information regarding university policies, rather than forcing those needing information to search it out.

The Core Support Subcommittee also recommends an emphasis on continuous refinement of administrative processes, empowering and encouraging faculty, staff, and students to search for imaginative solutions to problems, and the provision of training on an ongoing basis. Finally, they recommend funding programmatic initiatives at a sufficient level for success, to assist in eliminating a scarcity mentality.

The Core Support Subcommittee thoroughly, thoughtfully and critically examined the state of core institutional supports. While they found considerable strengths, implementing key organizational improvements can make a critical difference in the success of new research and education initiatives. Emphasizing professional development and mutual support will contribute to an improved campus culture and greater effectiveness as an institution.

The Core Support Subcommittee responded to the following challenge:

Develop specific thoughts on addressing core university improvement areas which will be essential in supporting any programmatic initiatives

Members of Core Support Subcommittee:

*Pat Grow
Jennifer Kang Derwent
Lisa Montgomery
Joseph Orgel
Holli Pryor-Harris
Timothy Schug*



Innovation Sandbox

The Subcommittee recommends that the President of IIT adopt the following as his mission for the Innovation Sandbox: *Use the Innovation Sandbox to foster communication of novel ideas and their development within the IIT community through an environment free from the traditional constraints of discipline resource allocations, with his permission to fail.*

The Innovation Sandbox Subcommittee believes that the Innovation Sandbox concept proposed by President Anderson provides a major opportunity for the university to achieve a diverse culture that welcomes (embraces, initiates, fosters, cultivates, nurtures and develops) bold and transformational ideas.

The Sandbox will provide a structure for inspiring, communicating, and marketing new ideas and will create opportunities for intellectual interaction, while promoting collaborations leading to new ideas. Implementing the Sandbox concept across the university to strengthen the culture of innovation will require novel approaches.

The Subcommittee recommends a communication strategy that connects the entire community with the events of the Sandbox. Both in-person gatherings and a robust website would encourage collaborations, inform the campus of ongoing progress and successes, and share feedback from the President on why certain ideas merit further support. Incentives, such as a cash prize, could also be considered to make playing in the Sandbox a desirable activity.

Ideas in the Sandbox would move through six stages as they progress: formalization, evaluation, green-lighting, resource allocation, development, and final assessment. Faculty, staff and students playing in the Sandbox would draft one page concept papers and submit them online to the Sandbox Advisory Panel, where they would also be viewable by potential collaborators. The Panel would review each submission and decide if it should progress to the President. The Panel could include community voting as one consideration of merit.

The President will then review the submissions, the opinions of the Advisory Panel, and feedback from the community, and choose whether or not to green-light the idea. Green-lit ideas are eligible for funding and resources. Every three months Sandbox teams will submit a progress report to the Advisory Panel for input from the President, Panel, and broader community. At the end of a year of development the idea is assessed by the President.

Successful ideas will grow out of the Sandbox into Semi-Core status, which is defined as

The Innovation Sandbox Subcommittee responded to the following challenge:

Comment on the innovation sandbox – criteria for playing in it, guidelines for time allowed in it, development of resources to promote activities, processes for advancing the sandbox ideas to semi-core status.

Members of Innovation Sandbox Subcommittee:

*Felice Batlan
Dylan Easley
Frank Flury
Ellen Jordan Reidy
Dennis Sullivan
Christopher White*



a course that is in demand, or a project that has attracted outside funding. News of these activities must be pushed back out to the university community with the utmost transparency. As ideas in the Sandbox reach the end of the life cycle, whether adopted as a Semi-Core operation or abandoned, they must be celebrated publicly. Creating a culture of innovation can be accomplished by enabling people in the IIT community to connect and share their ideas and expertise, follow the progress of Sandbox ideas, and witness that participation in the Sandbox is rewarded, whether it yields implementable ideas or not.



Blue Ocean

The Blue Ocean Subcommittee considered themes that emerged from the Many Voices, One Vision input and brainstormed to identify the following Blue Ocean opportunities. The Subcommittee identified possible first steps toward each. Initiating any of them, however, will require IIT to exhibit support through culture, resource allocation decisions and reward structure.

The first Blue Ocean idea is a student-centered educational model asking students to “solve the world’s problems.” Students would form diverse cohorts to work together on a large problem of their choosing with the assistance of an enthusiastic faculty coordinator. The projects could be coordinated with IPRO Enterprises and graduation honors awarded based on project results.

A closer-to-home opportunity would be solving a world problem, starting in our own backyard. A “Sustainable Urban Systems Consortium” would use the city as a living educational and research lab for urban systems that could tie in every discipline on campus. This initiative supports President Anderson’s mission of using the City of Chicago as a platform. Connections across research and education will be forged with Chicago City Colleges and High Schools to create community efforts and pipelines to IIT.

The Subcommittee felt strongly that there should be a Blue Ocean Seminar Series to stimulate the generation of new ideas. Seminars could cover three distinct but interrelated categories: Research Blue Ocean, Education Blue Ocean and Campus-wide Blue Ocean. The seminars could be a combination of talks and facilitated creativity workshops designed to support the investigation of new ideas in each of these categories.

Finally, the Subcommittee saw promise for a Global Solutions Enterprise consisting of several cross-disciplinary think tanks organized in terms of human problems such as providing high-quality health care to poor people, rather than research problems. This approach would be much more likely to generate passionate convergence across different disciplines.

The Global Solutions Enterprise would be largely driven by faculty, and could be a good complement to the student-drive Solve the World’s Problems idea. Strong linkages would need to be developed to the Innovation Sandbox, as well as connections to industry executives with relevant interest and expertise who could also be invited to participate on the team.

The Blue Ocean Subcommittee responded to the following challenge:

What are the 4-6 most interesting ideas you heard from the “many voices” and from your committee deliberations

Members of Blue Ocean Subcommittee:

*Paul Anderson
Patricia Bach
Bob Carlson
Krishna Erramilli
Cynthia Hood*
