I. Letter from the Chief Information Officer

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to share with you the 2015 Office of Technology Services Annual Plan. Today’s information technology (IT) is such a routine and reliable part of university life that IT is often seen as a basic utility. Simultaneously, IT is viewed as a transformative force for advancing innovative thinking and a tool to improve education. The impact on society of technology solutions has never been more promising despite the current economic climate. We live in a time where information technology is impacting work, entertainment, healthcare and, of course, education at a level that few ever imagined. In fact, advances in technology are helping to define the characteristics of 21st-century education.

Mobile technology, e-publishing, large-scale open courses, and social networking are just a few examples of changes that are already impacting the higher education landscape. Our students are coming to campus with new expectations, including the desire to learn anywhere, anytime. These digital natives who are “always” connected will bring change accompanied by challenges, but ultimately they will drive us to improve education and our university. This reality has fundamental implications for how we design and deliver our academic programs as well as how we gather, share and use knowledge to support student success. Technology is expanding student access and changing the fundamentals of both how we go about the teaching-learning process and how the university operates. How and what technology services we provide is changing with ever greater frequency.

Given the level of change in our environment, we have decided to develop annual plans going forward.

This plan is dedicated to the hard-working professionals at UB’s Office of Technology Services along with our partners at the university and throughout the University System of Maryland. I encourage you to share your questions or comments with me and the members of our team as we continue to build an outstanding IT environment for our university. Part of our strategy development for 2015 will be to reconsider all of our current planning cycles and assess how best to align our annual plans in the future.

Sincerely,

David Bobart
Vice President for Technology and CIO
University of Baltimore

II. Year in Review, 2014

The past year was a successful and productive one for the Office of Technology Services (OTS) in support of the University of Baltimore. OTS’ activities supporting university goals were extensive. With a continued focus on planning, partnerships and resource efficiency, the division was able to move forward a number of initiatives on schedule and on budget.
Alongside all of the projects that are required to keep the technology environment current and supported, the following happened:

- In partnership with the Divisions of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs (EMSA) and Academic Affairs, the larger “Degree Audit” initiative made significant progress:
  - Automated transfer credit evaluation was implemented leading to critical improvement in effectiveness and efficiency (E&E) for the Office of the Registrar. Not only has that eliminated a great deal of manual effort, but the formalization of transfer rules has provided much needed documentation to eliminate dependency on individual staff members.
  - Students in the School of Law gained access to their degree audit information. While the structure of the program makes this beneficial than for other types of students, feedback has been positive.
  - Automated graduation processing for the School of Law went live in spring 2014 as another E&E effort eliminating significant manual effort.

- In partnership with Academic Affairs, the Education Advisory Board Student Success Collaborative (EAB SSC) pilot project was launched to primarily provide academic advisors additional information for making decision in their work that is supported by predictive analytics based on historical student information. The data mapping, integration and single sign-on work was completed in 2014 in support of programmatic pilots in the coming year.

- In partnership with EMSA, an outsourced transcript service was implemented resulting in additional E&E in the Office of the Registrar and an additional self-service capability for students.

- In partnership with University Relations, a new campus calendar was developed for the university website.

- In partnership with the Offices of Admission, a new cloud-based Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system was implemented for prospection and recruitment.

Feedback on user support remained very positive in 2014:

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<td>Call Center Surveys 1 to 5</td>
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Surveys are sent for a sampling of helpdesk tickets that are created. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the best, OTS averaged 4.82. In December, OTS migrated to a new system for service management and data was too incomplete for inclusion in this report.

From a planning and resource allocation perspective, the division continued to improve its adoption of project portfolio management (PPM) as a way of handling the evaluation, analysis and prioritization of projects ranging from multi-month ERP (enterprise resource planning) upgrades to infrastructure replacement. OTS receives numerous project requests each year. To determine appropriate priorities, resources needed, and the scope of each project OTS created a project process and groomed a team of business analysts to perform these activities. Its business analysts are the first point of contact for IT-related projects. The analyst will meet with the project requestor(s) to ensure all information is gathered to determine the resources needed and clearly define the outcomes expected. When this initial assessment is completed,
then the project can be prioritized in accordance with university goals and objectives. One outcome of the PPM approach is that the analysts are positioned to better support campus units by bridging/facilitating communication between areas. This happens naturally on projects, but is now happening more informally as efforts across campus look for resources or understanding as to what is already happening on campus.

Organizationally, the division underwent significant realignment and change. In January, David Riggin joined the OTS team as the Director of Enterprise Applications and Database Systems. In partnership with Academic Affairs, Paul Walsh was promoted to Assistant Vice President for Academic Innovation and Instructional Support. While still an employee in OTS and retaining oversight of e-Learning and instructional technology, facilities and support, Paul assumed leadership of the Office of Academic Innovation (OAI). The OTS Call Center and Personal Computing Support teams were reassigned to Mason Paris, Deputy Chief Information Officer. Josh Offermann, formerly an employee of the UB Police, was reassigned to OTS as a Security Systems Specialist, shifting additional technical responsibility for physical access controls and video surveillance to the division. Reporting to Alex Davis, Senior Systems Analyst, Josh joined the team that functions across the division responsible for analysis, project management, information security and enterprise architecture.

III. The Year Ahead, 2015

A significant benefit of the cultural adoption of project portfolio management and planning at the University of Baltimore has been the benefit to forecast and schedule efforts as well as plan for resources. As such, 2015 already has a “crowded plate.” Despite ongoing budget challenges, major non-infrastructure related efforts continue to be supportable with the following overall focuses:

- Support Enrollment, Progression and Completion
- Technology Strategy and Structured Planning
- Improve University IT Infrastructure
- Middle States and a Culture of Assessment

In a world where access to information and communication technology is fully decentralized, where every device is potentially compromised, and where economics force a more strategic approach to sourcing, the job of managing technology is more about policy, architecture, contracting, efficiency, and relationship building than it is about hardware speeds and feeds. Accordingly, this year’s goals are organized around four themes designed to focus attention on the challenges and opportunities at hand: student success, innovation and collaboration, and IT infrastructure.

IV. Organization, Resources and Reallocation

FY2015 was another difficult budget year for the division. While no reorganization was planned for 2015, the midyear budget reduction may necessitate reconsideration of this. In support of budget reduction, the following vacant positions were eliminated:

- Director of Instructional Technology, Facilities and Support
- Telecommunication Specialist

Additionally, the 2.5% budget reduction required reductions in all areas with replacement and renewal funding for campus infrastructure and equipment providing a majority source of the required funding. OTS
will look for every opportunity during the rest of the fiscal year to reallocate to replacement and renewal as possible, and will continue to request budget increases for replacement and renewal as possible.

In late 2014, OTS did gain approval to fill the previously approved e-Learning Instructional Designer position and OTS anticipates completing this process by February 2015.

V. Major Goals and Objectives

The Office of Information Technology’s mission is to align with and facilitate progress toward the university’s strategic goals, deliver and continue to improve enterprise technology services, and partner with distributed campus technology groups.

A. Strategic Goal: Support Enrollment, Progression and Completion

1. Strategic Objective: Remove Barriers to Enrollment

   a) The current online application for admission is antiquated, resource intensive to support, complicated to update and most importantly, has a content design that requires applicants to answer unnecessary questions. OTS will partner with the Offices of Admission to replace the online application.

   b) In 2014, the Merrick School of Business (MSB) redesigned its graduate business curriculum to support 1.5 credit sessions within the existing semester structure. OTS will partner with EMSA and MSB to offer additional options for applicants to apply which will introduce additional flexibility and make the programs more appealing.

2. Strategic Objective: Support Student Progression and Completion

   a) In partnership with EMSA and Academic Affairs, conclude the Degree Audit initiative, providing all undergraduate and graduate students, who were admitted Fall 2011 or after, with degree audit capability. As an additional outcome, graduation processing for all students will be automated resulting in additional E&E in the Office of the Registrar.

   b) In partnership with Academic Affairs, pilot the Education Advisory Board Student Success Collaborative in high enrollment undergraduate programs as a precursor to implementation for advising of all undergraduates.

3. Strategic Objective: Enable Data-Driven Course Demand Projection

   a) Having completed the foundational work necessary to support degree audits for students, reliable data may now be available to project multi-year course demand. In partnership with EMSA and Academic Affairs, a consultant will be engaged to advise what approaches might be taken to project course demand.
b) With the Degree Audit initiative having defined requirements, rules and relationships in the student information system, an additional unimplemented function known as the Academic Planner will be evaluated. This will allow students to model their own future schedules. If used sufficiently, this will also provide multi-year course demand information, based not on need but on when students actually plan to take the courses.

B. Strategic Goal: Technology Strategy and Structured Planning

1. Strategic Objective: Identification and Development of Needed Technology Strategies

a) With major multi-year initiatives being completed or well underway, the division should assess areas of need or opportunity and establish workgroups to develop strategies as appropriate or possible.

2. Strategic Objective: Consistent Scheduled Cyclical Planning and Associated Activities

a) OTS accomplishes at least seventeen areas of cyclical planning with the necessary results, which are often aligned with the schedules of other major campus planning activities; however, it is not clear if the overall planning is actually effective and/or efficient. In some cases, planning occurs less formally and is accomplished only by the competence and dedication of the staff involved. The leadership of the division will conduct an overall assessment of planning and associated activities, and develop a new planning structure if appropriate. Engagement with and input from campus partners will be necessary. The overall management objective is to standardize the ordinary so that OTS can get on with the extraordinary.

3. Strategic Objective: Capacity Planning Enabled by Capacity Tracking

a) Full adoption by staff of tracking time spent on categories of effort will enable OTS to report on how staffing resources are being allocated. Adoption in OTS units except for Call Center, Personal Computing Services and Media and Classroom Services will be included in the respective performance management programs (PMP).

b) This data will help OTS leadership assess whether staffing resources are focused effectively, and may illustrate efforts that should be reconsidered. Further, this may identify needed technology strategy changes.

c) Additionally, the data will enable OTS to project cyclical resource needs and schedule the allocation far in advance in support of more accurate resource planning for non-cyclical efforts.

C. Strategic Goal: Improve University IT Infrastructure
1. **Strategic Objective: Leverage Cloud-Based Solutions to Offer Greater Capacity and Additional Capability**

   a) On-premise email and file storage solutions have not been able to compete with the capacity of cloud-based alternatives for some time. Additionally, these solutions are providing capabilities that would normally require IT to implement entirely different solutions at significant cost. OTS will leverage the capacity and capabilities offered by Microsoft Office 365 to provide students, faculty and staff with new or greater email, file storage, communication and collaboration capabilities.

   b) Students, faculty and staff have piecemeal solutions for synchronous video communication and collaboration. In several cases, campus units are paying for services so this has the potential to reduce overall costs. All students, faculty and staff will have access to Microsoft Lync as part of Office 365.

   c) Today, there is no dedicated technology environment for collaboration at the University. Tools like Sakai and the R Drive are being used with some success. As part of Office 365, all students, faculty and staff will have access to Team Sites. OTS expects to begin piloting these in summer 2015 after management and policy considerations are explored and understood.

2. **Strategic Objective: Leverage Partnerships in Higher Education for User Benefit**

   a) While Internet access is now a commodity, cellular data access is still slower and more expensive than typical wireless network options. Although students can take classes and access certain services on other campuses, they are still “outsiders” or “guests.” As a first step to enabling our students, faculty and staff to have seamless wireless network access at other schools, and to enable the same populations to have access at the University of Baltimore, OTS has implemented EDUROAM joining 244 schools nationwide and many more worldwide in partnership.

D. **Strategic Goal: Middle States and a Culture of Assessment**

1. **Strategic Objective: Participate in the Middle States Planning Committee**

   a) As the planning process is launched, OTS will look for opportunities to participate and support this process. Where appropriate and possible, OTS will nominate staff to serve on workgroups and committees.

2. **Strategic Objective: Support Efforts as Outcomes of the Self-Study**

   a) As the Self-Study proceeds, various efforts are likely to be identified, defined and launched. OTS will support these where appropriate and possible.

3. **Strategic Objective: Strengthen a Culture of Assessment in OTS**

   a) OTS has long measured certain things as a form of ongoing assessment, with a focus on customer service. The current project portfolio management process includes several assessment activities. OTS will leverage the Middle States process as an opportunity and catalyst for reconsidering and documenting assessment activities inside the division to recognize what is already being done, ensure that it is being done purposefully and to look for opportunities to promote a culture that values assessment.
VI. Alignment with UB Goals

The 2014-2017 strategic plan’s six goals can be equally viewed as value statements – a commitment to:

- Student success
- Educational access
- Innovation
- Scholarship, research and creative activity
- Regional and resource stewardship
- The UB community

The Office of Technology Services planning compliments and supports those campus values. Student success, direct support of faculty through innovative application of technology and E&E continue to be OTS’ primary criterion for setting project priorities, managing resources, and engaging the UB community.

VII. Concluding Remarks

The Office of Technology Services is responsible for all centralized technology services at the University of Baltimore. This includes technical support for desktop and mobile computing, IT helpdesk, enterprise applications, communications technology, networking, information security, instructional technology, classroom support and e-Learning. Some additional atypical areas of responsibility are project portfolio management, analysis for physical security technology and overall support for programmatic IT-related labs in the College of Arts and Sciences.

OTS is optimistic about the future of IT at UB, despite the challenging budget situation of the past several years. The process of leveraging technology to impact learning starts with a commitment to the university’s entire ecosystem of information technology people and systems. Although the journey is not yet complete, we are gradually transcending debates about centralization, decentralization, and control. Instead, we are moving toward an environment of intentional interdependence in which each of us supports and relies upon others. OTS is more than a service provider – it is a solution partner.

New attitudes and approaches to IT and a stance on valuing leadership and self-development will enable excellent IT service and support for the faculty, students, staff, researchers and outreach personnel who truly embody, build and continually recreate the University of Baltimore.