Preface

The forces of transformation in higher education are all around us. Privatization, globalization, and lifelong learning are just a few of the drivers in this competitive and continually changing environment. While it is often argued that many of the pressing problems of higher education can be ameliorated by technology, this book focuses on both the successes and failures associated with integrating information technology in colleges and universities. As higher education strives to maintain goals of quality, efficiency, and effectiveness, information technology is now playing—and will continue to play—a critical role in this process. However, the significance of that role is what appears to be in question. These factors contribute to the need to examine issues, trends, controversies, challenges, and opportunities facing higher education leaders and administrators as they begin to assess the value of information technology in their own institutions.

With the advent of easier-to-use and more cost-effective technology solutions, there is no longer the need to go through complex systems, intermediaries, and analysts. For the first time, education leaders and administrators have direct access to the information processes and systems that they require. Additionally, the ubiquitous presence called the Internet has ushered in a new era. Not only has information technology itself changed, but so too has the relationship between the public and private sectors, challenging long-held beliefs about the role of universities and traditional education structures. Additionally, higher education has come to rely on industry to find conceptual tools and technologies that it can apply, even though higher education is distinct in many ways from industry (e.g., organizational structure, governance, culture). There are scores of good books available on information technology in industry; however, most have little or

nothing to do with its applications in higher education. Perhaps what is most exciting about this field today is that the time is ripe for higher education to frame an internal dialogue about these issues.

The void that this book fills is threefold. First, educational leaders and practitioners need to enter the conversation based on the voice of their own experiences, as there has been very little written specifically about information technology in higher education. Secondly, the field of higher education has been very resistant to change in thinking about information systems and organizational transformation, and therefore this book brings together the perspective of a broad-based coalition of educators and practitioners from across the academy in order to explore these issues. Lastly, as higher education is at a crossroads in terms of the way the business of education is conducted, not only in terms of restructuring processes but also in terms of the core mission of higher education, this book brings the most important issues back to the center – teaching and learning.

This book demonstrates examples of the integration of information technology in higher education and explores the ways in which the application of information technology in higher education is both similar to and different from industry. This set of case studies attempts to bridge the gap between the application of information technology in industry and its application in higher education, as well as to assist students, practitioners, and researchers of higher education in their understanding and application of information technology.

The scope of the book covers a wide range of fields including communications, computer science, education, health sciences, management systems, and physiology. It encompasses a variety of topics such as strategic planning, management, knowledge production, distance learning, early technology adopters, course management, access, cultural change, and collaboration. There are also a range of institution types profiled, from community colleges to research universities, including public and private universities. The purpose of the case studies is to address and analyze issues that are common to higher education institutions as a way to highlight pressing problems and offer effective solutions.

How To Use This Book

This book was designed to be used by administrators, teachers, students, information technology practitioners, policy-makers, and knowledge managers. It can be used by administrators to acquire a better sense of the issues they face in integrating information technology in their institutions. Teachers and students in educational administration, management, and information science can enjoy

the practical hands-on approach to case study analysis and will be able to apply research and theory to their practical experience. Information technology practitioners can benefit from real-life examples that will help assess the maze of options and challenges facing them on a day-to-day basis. Policy-makers will gain a deeper understanding of the short- and long-term effects of the efforts of others, and in doing so be guided toward better decisions based on the needs and perspectives of various stakeholders. Knowledge managers will see first hand how the information needs of an organization can be translated into knowledge-based systems.

There are several types of cases in this book. The majority of them are case studies written in narrative form that provide the reader with detailed context and analysis about a specific institution's experience with information technology. There are also research-related cases that discuss the findings of an implementation or design of information technology, and there are point-of-view cases that present thought-provoking analysis of the changes and transformations occurring in higher education as they relate to information technology. The chapters are intended to be used as stand-alone cases; however, in their totality, the cases provide an overarching framework for the integration of information technology in higher education.

Each case contains several open-ended questions at the beginning of the chapter. The purpose of the questions is to provide the reader with a guiding backdrop to think about the main issues in the case. There is also a set of discussion questions provided at the end of each case that can be used to generate or lead a discussion after the case has been read.

Acknowledgments

This book of case studies was a collaborative effort among many educators, researchers, and practitioners. The authors represented in this book are among the pioneers, early adopters, and risk-takers in information technology in higher education. And for the tremendous amount of time and effort that it takes to put together a case study, I have tremendous gratitude and appreciation for the authors who have shared their insight and experiences, because they have indeed made this book possible.

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