During April and May, the University will be moving forward with a review of its information technology (IT) environment. The review will consider IT functions and infrastructure across the University with the objective of identifying the current scope, scale and expectations of IT in order to identify gaps and make recommendations about how to move forward to address them.

Overseeing the review will be a sponsorship team comprised of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic), Charlotte Yates, Vice-President (Research), Malcolm Campbell, and Vice-President (Finance, Administration & Risk), Don O’Leary. The Vice-President (External), Daniel Atlin, will also contribute to the review and the information technologies in his division will be included. The project will entail consideration of the University’s full IT landscape incorporating not only the activities of the Computing and Communications Services department but also major IT responsibilities and activities undertaken elsewhere across the University.

The institution-wide IT review has been prompted by the increasing recognition of the importance of information technologies to the delivery of University programs and services. Whether in the form of web tools, research applications or major enterprise business processing applications, IT is a critical underlying component of the University’s infrastructure, as essential to its operations as traditional infrastructure such as hydro, heat, and physical space. At the same time, growing IT-related demands, including those associated with data security, resource allocation, and breadth of IT systems and services, has made it essential to have a strong handle on our current IT environment and the means for its future evolution. The University’s operations are currently supported by a number of enterprise-wide business systems, many of which were installed in response to the Y2K risks over 15 years ago, are “mature” and may be in need of reinvestment. Over this same period, University IT applications have continued to multiply and contribute to a relatively decentralized IT environment. Resources for IT have also diversified with sources extending to include cost recovery initiatives and departmental funding programs.

These many challenges and opportunities underlie the need for this comprehensive review of IT functions and organizational structures across the University. U of G is not the first university or only institution of higher learning to undertake such an IT review. The pervasive role of IT in our sector is prompting many of our peer institutions to pursue similar efforts to clarify their current situation and the factors informing future developments.

A report which includes observations and recommendations will result from the review process. It is expected to provide valued clarity about the way forward in a manner that allows our IT environment to align with the foundations and themes expressed in the University’s 2016 Strategic Framework.
The process of the review will include an information-gathering phase through April with a final report from the consultants completed by the late spring. Information gathering will include use of survey tools and meetings with various individuals with responsibilities closely linked to IT decision-making, planning, and service delivery in various parts of the University. The final report will give an indication of the current state of the University’s IT environment and offer recommendations for its ongoing operation and development. Recommendations will reflect best practices in the postsecondary sector and point to opportunities for greater effectiveness and efficiencies in service delivery. It will identify any major gaps in IT services, systems, infrastructures and governance and provide advice about actions to address them.

To proceed with the review, the firm PwC has been retained to provide its expert services and experience, including insight acquired from the completion of similar reviews at other universities and colleges in Canada and elsewhere in the world. PwC’s work in support of the review will be directed by the Project Sponsorship Team noted above and guided with the further assistance of Vicki Hodgkinson, Special Advisor to the President, who serves as U of G’s project manager and Kim McCaughan, Executive Assistant to the Provost, who will be our project coordinator. Information about the project, including information about the PwC personnel assigned to the review, the overall approach to the review, and periodic up-dates on its progress, is available on-line http://www.uoguelph.ca/vpacademic/itreview/. 