

APRU Videoconference on Disaster Recovery

Ilee Rhimes, CIO and vice provost for Information Technology Services (ITS) at USC, gave an introduction to USC's disaster-recovery (DR) planning. The introduction included the following points:

- USC is taking a multifaceted approach to business continuity and disaster recovery. Plans include mapping the interdependencies among systems, while establishing remote DR sites and helping to engage the entire university community in the planning process.
- USC has a federated model of IT support: ITS is responsible for centrally provided IT services, such as email, Shibboleth single sign-on, and Blackboard learning management system; the schools and units are responsible for their own local IT systems.

Adele Shakal, IT project manager for ITS, presented an overview of ITS strategy and planning:

- ITS has been working with the university's certified business-continuity specialist to conduct a business-impact analysis.
- ITS is developing plans to ensure improved documentation and cross-training of staff for critical ITS business functions.
- ITS has divided IT services into 4 tiers with different degrees of criticality.
- ITS has identified the relevant timeframe for those research and teaching functions that would need to be restored within 1 to 14 days of a disaster.
- ITS is developing hot and cold remote disaster-recovery locations.

The discussion highlighted the following common concerns and challenges:

- Funding DR efforts.
- Identifying and staffing remote DR locations; managing vendor relationships.
- Managing expectations across the institution and educating users.
- Risk management.
- Testing services for failover to DR locations.

Possible solutions were identified, including:

- Reallocating resources to fund DR efforts.
- Collaborating with other institutions to establish reciprocal remote locations.
- Leveraging cloud solutions.
- Revising service-level agreements to manage expectations about DR capabilities.