

Moving IT Forward →

Insights from the 2025 CIO Listening Sessions

University of Wisconsin–Madison, January 2026

Contents

Executive summary.....	1
Session planning & format.....	2
Outcomes.....	4
Participation & reception.....	5
Findings.....	7
Discussion.....	20
Appendix A. Data collection & analysis methods.....	21
Appendix B. Thematic categories & codes.....	24
Appendix C. Padlet submissions by upvotes.....	27
Appendix D. Demographics & participation.....	28
Appendix E. Attendance data by session.....	30
Appendix F. Recommendations for future sessions.....	33
Appendix G. Project planning & other information.....	35

Executive summary

The CIO Listening Sessions were a series of facilitated discussion forums where IT professionals from across UW–Madison met with Chief Information Officer Didier Contis to share challenges, discuss opportunities and identify strategic priorities.

Eight sessions from October through November 2025 created space for open conversation among UW–Madison’s IT professionals: distributed IT teams, Division of Information Technology (DoIT) employees, and leadership. The sessions fostered insightful discussions on key topics for the university’s IT community.

Participation exceeded expectations

Based on the 2018 CIO Listening Sessions, the planning team anticipated 200 attendees offering around 200 suggestions. The fall 2025 sessions far surpassed these projections, drawing 356 IT professionals representing 31 schools, colleges and divisions.

The sessions were dynamic and engaging, with most of the 90 minutes devoted to hearing from attendees. More than half of all attendees contributed verbal comments — a remarkably high participation rate.

The high engagement demonstrated the IT community's readiness for strategic dialogue and the effectiveness of the session design. A detailed analysis is in the [Participation & reception](#) section. Detailed attendance and participation information can be found in [Appendix D](#) and [Appendix E](#).

Strengthened relationships & revealed strategic priorities

Attendees valued the opportunity to engage directly with the CIO and learn from colleagues across distributed and central IT. Post-event survey feedback showed strong appreciation for the format, facilitation and transparent approach to discussing sensitive topics.

A close thematic analysis of the information collected from the sessions revealed five strategic priorities described in the [Outcomes](#) section.

Key themes emerged

A team trained in research methods systematically analyzed session data. The analysis showed an IT ecosystem with strong cultural cohesion and ongoing challenges, detailed in [Findings](#).

Consistent themes included a strong sense of pride in supporting the university's mission, though challenges like limited resources, technical debt and fragmented governance create barriers and hinder flexibility.

Next steps

This report provides foundational knowledge for IT strategic planning. The detailed findings offer opportunities for deeper exploration of specific issues like governance strategy, compliance frameworks and the different perspectives among IT stakeholders.

The strong participation and positive feedback demonstrate a clear demand for continued engagement. Future sessions should build on lessons learned — including the value of DoIT-specific forums, the effectiveness of multiple participation channels, and the importance of transparent communication about sensitive topics.

Session planning & format

Six sessions — three in person and three virtual — were open to all university IT professionals. We also held two sessions exclusively for DoIT employees (one virtual and one in person).

Session dates, times & locations

1. Thu, Oct 2, 10:30am to noon, DeLuca Biochemical Sciences Building
2. Tue, Oct 7, 12:30pm to 2pm, virtual
3. Tue, Oct 14, 10:30am to noon, Computer Sciences Building (limited to DoIT employees)
4. Mon, Oct 20, 9am to 10:30am, virtual
5. Thu, Nov 6, 1pm to 2:30pm, virtual (limited to DoIT employees)
6. Wed, Nov 12, 9:30am to 11am, Health Sciences Learning Center
7. Thu, Nov 13, 1pm to 2:30pm, virtual
8. Tue, Nov 18, 10am to 11:30am, Education Building

Planning considerations

The planning team worked to ensure equitable and convenient access to the sessions. We offered an equal number of virtual and in-person options, with in-person sessions distributed across campus. We selected campus venues based on location, cost, capacity and A/V capabilities. All sessions followed the same format and were the same length, and most were scheduled before Madison-area school dismissal times to accommodate parents. In-person sessions concluded around lunchtime to give teams the option to attend together and then go out for lunch. We also varied the days of the week to accommodate standing meetings.

Session format

The sessions employed a facilitated forum model with the CIO serving as the focal point for engagement. All sessions were 90 minutes long and followed the same format. The in-person sessions accommodated up to 50 participants each, while the virtual sessions had no registration limit.

The team designed the experience to be flexible and inclusive of different engagement preferences. Participants had the option to engage verbally or by submitting anonymous written comments via Padlet (web-based collaborative software). The goal was to create a feeling of psychological safety by allowing attendees to choose the mode that best matched their comfort level and communication style.

During the sessions, facilitators alternated between inviting spoken responses and displaying written comments from Padlet, enabling the CIO to interact with attendees in both formats. All participants could view each other's Padlet comments in real-time during the session, and Padlets remained open for a limited period before and after each session.

Discussion prompts

The planning committee and the CIO developed open-ended questions to use as discussion prompts, with input from select DoIT and distributed IT leaders. To support thoughtful participation, we published the questions online so attendees could come prepared. Each question had roughly 15 minutes of facilitated discussion per session.

1. What are you proud of in your area?
2. What are your biggest technology challenges? What are your biggest technology opportunities?
3. Are there any local technology implementations for teaching and learning that could be scaled up to work at the university or enterprise level?
4. How is AI showing up in your conversations? Are there key topics, issues, concerns or questions that you are exploring?
5. Where are there opportunities to increase understanding and support between distributed and central IT?

Outcomes

The CIO Listening Sessions surpassed all expectations. The sessions had high attendance, with participants representing a wide range of departments, experience levels, disciplines and interests. Attendees said the sessions were well run and expressed a desire for more listening sessions in the near future.

The sessions strengthened relationships across the university's IT community. Feedback showed participants valued the opportunity to listen to and learn from one another. Participants reported that the format helped them feel safe speaking directly with the CIO and that their thoughts, concerns and ideas were heard and taken seriously.

We designed the sessions to generate empirical data through structured participant engagement. A team trained in qualitative and quantitative research methods analyzed the data and synthesized the themes and findings presented in this report.

Summary of findings

Information gathered from the CIO Listening Sessions revealed a university IT ecosystem marked by strong cultural cohesion, technical achievement and persistent structural challenges. Participants expressed pride in a people-focused IT culture that fosters cross-unit collaboration and behind-the-scenes efforts essential to supporting UW–Madison's mission of teaching, research and service.

Participants noted a range of accomplishments and challenges associated with the university's IT ecosystem. Notable IT-related accomplishments shared by participants include expanding access to the eduroam network across Wisconsin, increasing the number of hybrid classrooms, and contributing to the technological infrastructure through new computing environments like PlatformX, positioning UW as a leader in medical research.

Resource constraints, technical debt and fragmented governance were among the most frequently cited challenges in the current IT ecosystem. Participants highlighted tensions between centralizing IT and preserving distributed IT autonomy, noting risks to flexibility and research progress. Compliance burdens — especially around protected health information — compound these challenges, creating a “compliance divide” across the university.

In addition, participants offered insights into opportunities to improve the IT ecosystem. These opportunities included an interest in more formalized structures for distributed IT to weigh in on strategic decisions, better strategies for enterprise-level licensing, and exploring the scalability of IT Service Management (ITSM) practices to unify service delivery.

Emerging technologies, particularly AI, emerged as both promising and problematic. While many expressed enthusiasm for AI-enabled efficiencies and exploration, many also raised concerns about policy gaps, ethical risks and AI's environmental impact, underscoring the need for institutional guardrails.

Participants also emphasized strengthening relationships between central and distributed IT through liaison roles, bidirectional forums and transparent service catalogs.

Actionable insights

These insights reflect the main themes of governance, modernization and cultural cohesion discussed during the sessions:

1. **Strengthen governance and voice:** Establish a joint governance forum with decision rights to balance central IT priorities with distributed IT needs. Transparent roadmaps and risk-based compliance frameworks aim to unify IT strategy while preserving local flexibility for distributed IT stakeholders.
2. **Address resource and technical debt:** Manage the fund lifecycle and retire technical debt with clear exit ramps. Prioritize enterprise licensing and identity patterns to reduce duplication and manage costs effectively.
3. **Promote workforce development and engagement:** Create liaison programs and “engineer-to-engineer” exchanges to foster collaboration and empathy across IT cultures within central and distributed IT. Expand training and professional development opportunities, particularly in AI literacy and ITSM practices.
4. **Shape AI strategy and guardrails:** Publish AI use guidelines, ethics review patterns and sustainability considerations. Track vendor AI features and integrate risk assessments into procurement to ensure responsible adoption.
5. **Improve service transparency and scalability:** Develop a university-wide service catalog and consumable roadmaps for platform choices. Explore ITSM coaching and middleware templates to accelerate reuse and standardization.

Participation & reception

With 356 attendees across the eight sessions, the event series had attendance comparable to that of large university IT professional gatherings in the same year (compare to: 324 attendees at the Information & Technology Leadership Conference, 402 attendees at the IT Professionals Conference, 516 attendees at the spring DoIT All Staff Meeting).

Event series statistics

- 568 total registrations
- 384 total attendance (356 unique, after accounting for repeat attendance)
- 68% turnout rate (71% in-person, 63% virtual)
- 188 attendees contributed verbal comments (53% participation rate)
- Average attendees per session: 32 in-person, 61 virtual
- Average cancellations per session: 4 in-person, 12 virtual
- Average no-shows per session: 8 in-person, 23 virtual

Event feedback survey analysis

Nearly 1 in 4 attendees completed the survey.

Thematic insights & appreciations:

- **Planning:** Some respondents noted that planning for the event was smooth and thorough, and several specifically expressed appreciation for receiving the questions in advance.
- **Format:** Respondents reported that the engagement format (verbal engagement and Padlet options), facilitation and organization during the event were conducive to a rich discussion. Specifically noted:
 - Pace and time management were effectively facilitated
 - Appreciation for both verbal and written communication channels for engagement
- **Engagement:** Many respondents noted the group's high level of engagement, the depth of knowledge reflected in participants' contributions, and Didier's high level of engagement, interactivity and approachability. Multiple respondents also noted that the questions were highly engaging.
- **Concept:** Some respondents expressed a desire for continued engagement of this kind. Specifically, they requested future listening sessions that are more frequent, longer and offered on a regular cadence.
- **Overall appreciation:** The majority of respondents emphasized their overall appreciation and satisfaction with the event.

Short-term actionable suggestions:

- **Follow-up:** Several respondents emphasized the desire to see tangible follow-up from these sessions.

Considerations for future in-person sessions

- **Narrow the focus:** Many respondents felt that future listening sessions might benefit from a narrower focus, exploration of timely topics, targeting specific groups or the option of a separate session for managers.
- **Round table seating:** Although only one respondent expressed a preference for round-table seating, it's reasonable to consider the layout's advantages, since two sessions with high engagement used round-table seating. This may have been especially important for the distributed IT sessions, helping build comfort with sharing.

Considerations for future online sessions

- **Plan for hesitant verbal engagement:** The online sessions had significantly less verbal engagement and were at times more easily dominated by fewer voices (perhaps because fewer people felt comfortable sharing), as noted by multiple respondents. Future planning committees should consider ways to support dialogue, such as breakout groups, an opening question to break the ice, or other strategies to bring in a diversity of voices.
- **Chat:** Several respondents wanted the opportunity to engage with the group via chat. While this wasn't feasible in this round of listening sessions, future planning committees might consider using the chat to boost engagement.
- **Breakout groups:** A few respondents expressed that smaller breakout groups might have helped bring forth ideas.

Findings

We have divided our findings into two sections:

- [Section 1](#): A summary of key themes based on analysis of transcript and Padlet data
- [Section 2](#): A more focused analysis of patterns that emerged within Padlet data

The findings section is complemented by three artifacts included in the appendix:

1. A list of thematic categories, descriptions and codes ([Appendix B](#))
2. A select list of Padlet submissions by popularity ([Appendix C](#))
3. An overview of demographics and participation data ([Appendix D](#))

Section 1 – Analysis of key themes by question

This section presents a summary of key themes from the transcript and Padlet data, organized by question topic. Each question-based summary follows the same structure: key themes, a narrative summary, representative quotes from the transcript, and Copilot-generated insights.

Q1. What are you proud of in your area?

Q1 Key themes

- A people-centered IT culture that fosters the investment of relationships both within and across schools, colleges and divisions — serving as a catalyst for building, testing, implementing and refining IT services and solutions that tackle complex challenges at a large, decentralized university.
- A unique sense of pride and commitment that IT professionals feel, along with their teams, as both essential enablers and “unsung heroes.” This includes high standards for quality work, the need to be adaptable in their roles, and a level of self-reliance needed to manage and sustain services that often take place behind the scenes.
- An evidence-based commitment to leveraging technology in ways that support and advance the teaching, research and service missions of the university, even in the face of resource constraints. This is coupled with a keen attention to how the impact of technology benefits broader audiences of end users (eg, students, faculty, staff, state residents) and cross-institutional collaborators.

Q1 Narrative summary

Participants framed accomplishments through service continuity, culture and reach. Examples include expanding eduroam into K–12 education, maintaining 24×7 operations, and scaling hybrid classrooms to ~350 rooms in four years. Pride centered on teams that “make it work” despite limited resources. Accomplishments also extend to infrastructure improvements that enrich instruction, research and public engagement. Cross-unit partnerships (eg, Libraries, Extension, Continuing Studies), cross-institutional partnerships (eg, Ice Cube, PlatformX) and student-focused wins (eg, precollege access, improving classroom accessibility) were strongly featured while acknowledging persistent budget constraints. Achievements are often behind the scenes, yet they are acknowledged for how they materially improve access, reliability and user experience.

Q1 Representative quotes

- “The work we do often is transparent, and it is behind the scenes ... we are the people behind the scenes making this work, and it is not always visible” (S3, DoIT).
- “Madison schools have eduroam ... that’s because of work that started here at UW–Madison in partnership with K-12 schools across the state” (S4, DoIT).
- “We are leading the country in bringing together multimodal data that includes [protected health information] from all over the country ... [PlatformX] has been built by our team at SMPH ... So, to be able to build that infrastructure, those data use agreements with all of these different institutions across the country and bring in archival data, GIS data, tissue data, OMIX data all together into a singular safe space, I’m very, very proud of that” (S6, Distributed IT).

- “I’m really proud of the way that all of our IT staff are working together ... we’re trying to help the departments [in our College] as well as meet the campus halfway with their ideas and their initiatives” (S7, Distributed IT).

Q1 Copilot-generated insights

- Celebrate mission-aligned wins alongside constraints, and with specific attention to amplifying the behind-the-scenes impact of the IT community.
- Sustain investments in identity and infrastructure reliability that underpin access.
- Further enable and leverage cross-unit collaboration models as a way to scale accomplishment pathways.

Q2a. What are your biggest technology challenges?

Q2a Key themes

- Managing a constant state of change in IT represents an ongoing challenge and places increasing strain on staff workload capacity and morale.
- Efforts to centralize any aspect of IT, without formalized structures that integrate stakeholder input to inform and shape strategic decision-making, perpetuate existing tensions between distributed IT and DoIT. While noted by stakeholders from different schools, colleges and divisions, this was particularly emphasized by participants who work in research.
- The diversity of needs and issues experienced by different IT stakeholder groups currently outpace efforts to respond with strategic solutions that can be implemented and sustained at an appropriate scale (eg, university-wide). This destabilizes IT customer support models — both within and beyond DoIT — in providing quality, coherent, stratified (ie, multi-tier) and secure forms of customer service.
- Fiscal efficiencies in IT are perceived to have limits, even when saving the university money is a primary goal (eg, software licensing). Budget and resource constraints driven by structural deficits and cost savings put a strain on staffing models and strategies for prioritizing investments.
- Compliance and data privacy regulations disparately impact areas of the university. This was particularly emphasized in areas where compliance issues and risks are associated with protected health information (PHI). This contributes to a perception of a “compliance divide” between schools, colleges and divisions that engage in research involving PHI and those who do not. The divide is marked by additional complexities of managing and storing data for research-related activities.

Q2a Narrative summary

Challenges center on under-resourcing, technical debt and complex compliance landscapes, especially around research that requires data to comply with HIPAA (eg, PHI, the need to de-identify data based on requirements from the NIH, research journals, etc). Efforts to centralize IT services without adequate voice or representation reduce flexibility, create bottlenecks in research, and stymie progress to address complex challenges with appropriate solutions. Fragmented ownership and variable help desk models complicate consistency, and exacerbate existing tensions between DoIT support and distributed IT needs. Respondents want risk-based approaches, better process documentation, and liaison roles to retire legacy systems and transition to supported services.

Q2a Representative quotes

- “We are moving to a place where there is a campus service [and] we don’t have a campus voice ... we have no actual way to give a voice or to give feedback.” (S1, Distributed IT)
- “I think a challenge for us is the constant change we have to deal with and manage ... when you’re constantly doing it, it’s exhausting for our team members and staff.” (S5, DoIT)
- “I think one of the challenges [with technical debt] we have is like we spin up these things and they might be pilots or things that we had a long time ago and then people become reliant on them ... there is four people using this thing that we [now] have to put efforts into maintain and secure ... and for whatever reason, we cannot retire that thing.” (S3, DoIT)
- “[Our unit] frequently onboards customers on campus and we inherit [the technical debt] they have.” (S3, DoIT)
- “[We are] dealing with the wall of compliance that’s just flowing out of everything ... We need to build it all bigger, faster, cheaper to keep our researchers happy and moving, but at the same time, we’re a very small team ... locally ... all of these compliance initiatives come with a lot of work and not extra funding to handle it ... [unfunded mandates] strain the capacities of our team in a lot of different directions.” (S6, Distributed IT)
- “The compliance divide is a serious challenge for us ... the School of Medicine and other schools with a health care component have to abide by much more restrictive compliance and regulation standards than everybody else at the university.” (S8, Distributed IT)

Q2a Copilot-generated insights

- Fund retirement/transition work (ie, technical debt reduction) with defined support exit ramps.
- Establish risk-based compliance guidance and faster approvals for low-risk datasets.
- Create named liaisons per division to unify identity/network changes and the models that aim to support and respond to customer needs.

Q2b. What are your biggest technology opportunities?

Q2b Key themes

- There is ample opportunity for articulating a clearer enterprise-level IT strategy to address enterprise-level IT challenges (eg, prioritization, technical debt, software licensing & procurement issues and other areas).
- A desire for a governance-based, rather than advisory-based, approach to centralization/federation efforts that preserves the voice and flexibility of distributed IT stakeholders.
- Establishment of IT liaisons that help broker the communication and relationships with distributed IT units.
- A call to leverage pragmatic approaches to understanding business needs associated with tool adoption and use. For example, closer examination of how tools are being utilized, or in some cases underutilized, was cited as a potential departure point for strategic IT improvement, refinement and alignment.
- A focused interest in software licensing and procurement issues that can help improve cost savings based on known licensees (eg, pooled contract negotiations), clarify “ownership” (eg, assuming responsibilities for support and responsibilities associated with risks), and granting flexibilities around software access post-employment (eg, graduate students who need access post-graduation to restricted data for publishing research).

Q2b Narrative

Opportunities focus on shared direction-setting and understanding how platform choices are being utilized — or, in some cases, underutilized. Participants expressed the need for formal mechanisms and structures where distributed units have a real voice that impacts decision-making, not just informal opportunities that represent a level of advisory input. University-level approaches (eg, central licensing, identity patterns, scalable ticketing and ITSM, accessible documentation) can bridge silos and balance software access flexibility with common security standards. Responses around opportunities emphasize governance with execution: community-informed decisions, transparent roadmaps, and identity-first architectures that simplify consumption and integration.

Q2b Representative quotes

- “Create a leadership group ... with voting capability ... so departmental IT groups can actually make change happen that a majority of IT groups would like to see happen.” (S1, Distributed IT)

- “I have heard from some [IT] groups that they would appreciate someone from DoIT who would come and understand their priorities and their needs. And maybe that is through some kind of liaison program where they are joining some regular meetings with the groups ... [where] the consultant is dedicated to the schools and groups.” (S3, DoIT)
- “Let’s understand unmet business needs ... so that we can come together and either choose a better product together ... or work to make the products we’re using better integrated.” (S4, Distributed IT)
- “[Our unit is] getting a new ticketing system [because] the old ticketing system has its challenges and we can do a lot better.” (S3, DoIT)
- “The [graduate student] finishes the dissertation and leaves, but they are continuing the relationship with the PI to finish up a paper or two, but then they lose [restricted] access to [data sets] ... There’s no listing that says when a [graduate student’s] access to [software] licenses expires.” (S6, Distributed IT)

Q2b Copilot-generated insights

- Stand up a joint governance forum with decision rights that balance central IT and distributed IT.
- Prioritize university-wide licensing and identity patterns to reduce duplication and manage costs effectively.
- Publish consumable roadmaps (eg, platform choices, APIs) with a clear “path-to-yes.”

Q3. Are there any local technology implementations for teaching and learning that could be scaled up to work at the university or enterprise level?

Q3 Key themes

- Participants identified opportunities that included — but extended far beyond — technology connected to teaching and learning.
- Software licensing and procurement efforts that more proactively address university-wide purchasing, renewals and oversight issues to reduce duplication and cost expand access for students in non-credit courses, and maintain connections between the university and its alumni base.
- Continued emphasis on adopting and expanding Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) practices (eg, KnowledgeBase) as a trusted and reliable strategy for consistent knowledge management at the enterprise level (eg, Knowledge-Centered Service or “KCS” methodology).

- Calls to explore Information Technology Service Management (ITSM) practices in DoIT as a potential model for university-level scalability.
- Some participants saw opportunity in promoting human connection and knowledge-exchange among researchers as a strategy for coupling technology with teaching and learning (eg, MERIT connecting with new faculty about IT support for research, a desired space for training qualitative researchers on coding software) while fostering a sense of community and support.
- The need to balance any increase in scaling with training and capacity-building needs to support development and end-user adoption.

Q3 Narrative summary

Innovations to scale include a desire for more university-wide licensing (eg, Gradescope, Articulate 360, qualitative analysis tools), broader adoption of multitenant applications (eg, Salesforce) and use of Automated Account Lifecycle Management (AALM) for account lifecycle and central observability/load-testing. ITSM practices and shared identity integrations (eg, Workday APIs, Intune, Workspace ONE) are reusable. There is general acknowledgement that moving beyond scratch-built “one-offs” and toward more enterprise-ready software and services is worth considering more aggressively — as long as the scaling of training, communities of practice and middleware are also integrated to meet local attributes while retaining central coherence.

Q3 Representative quotes

- “I work with tons of customers all over campus, and they all have a need for sharing information with their stakeholders, and so few of them know that the KnowledgeBase (KB) is federated ... without a doubt, to answer your question ... KB.” (S1, DoIT)
- “I am a distributed IT employee from [college name] ... we are having issues with software as well ... figuring out how to get licenses [and] who will support us ... a lot of times they won’t, and we have been reaching out to other schools and colleges [and] with other Big Ten schools this month to figure out how they are managing their software for instruction and research. So, any help or anyone in this room would like to help me with this, I would love that.” (S1, Distributed IT)
- “ITSM in general is something that we are doing and making progress with in DoIT ... How many help desks do we have on campus? I don’t know ... all of our DoIT ITSM processes are already scalable ... So, I am going to say ITSM at large has been overlooked [in terms of its scalability] at the campus level.” (S3, DoIT)
- “I have customers that need event registration technology, and none of the things that we offer incorporate all of their needs ... there are multiple schools that need event registration for the university to develop their own version that meets all of these requirements ... get all of these groups together and fund that together ... as a multitenant application.” (S3, DoIT).

- “One specific area I think about all the time is reaching researchers. I think there is a unique opportunity for [MERIT staff] to talk to new researchers ... and to be able to make sure IT is in the loop.” (S8, Distributed IT)
- “I think there’s a big opportunity on this campus to think about the portfolio of qualitative data analysis software we’re offering [students and researchers] and the support structure we offer to make sure that they can do their work in a way that is not isolated.” (S8, Distributed IT)

Q3 Copilot-generated insights

- Stand up portfolio-based licensing with shared funding and governance.
- Provide central observability/load-testing.
- Consider ITSM coaching services as an approach to scalability.
- Seed middleware templates for Workday/directory use cases to accelerate reuse.

Q4. How is artificial intelligence (AI) showing up in your conversations? Are there key topics, issues, concerns or questions that you are exploring?

Q4 Key themes

- More leadership strategy, oversight and management are needed to support AI adoption and literacy — including training opportunities and setting appropriate guardrails and expectations for use (eg, data user agreements).
- Budget and resource constraints limit opportunities to shape the pace and scope of a more comprehensive AI rollout strategy, which is why participants called for more clarity and definition around the existing capabilities and limitations of approved AI tool use (eg, token limits).
- Enthusiasm around AI use-case opportunities (eg, research, chatbots, transcription, coding help, streamlining workflows and other areas) is tempered by concerns about current gaps in policy, perceptions around misuse, questions about intellectual property (IP), and the adverse impacts AI can have on the environment (eg, energy consumption).
- There was a range of ethical issues and concerns associated with managing AI use at an institutional level, including bias/fairness in the search and screen process, academic integrity standards, safeguarding sensitive/restricted data, accuracy of information collected for research (eg, clinical documentation), threats to grant competitiveness and extramural funding.
- Some participants voiced specific concerns over how resource constraints at the institutional level could precipitate and expedite greater AI automation, which could, in turn, reduce or replace the need for human-generated work.

Q4 Narrative summary

Participants discussed a range of current and emerging impacts AI has had on schools, colleges and divisions, which included both the impacts on employees and the constituencies they serve (eg, faculty, staff, students, state residents, etc). AI discussions balanced pros (eg, enthusiasm and excitement) and cons (eg, guardrails in the form of policy development and expectation-setting). Faculty and staff seek clarity on approved tools, capabilities and limits, and protections around restricted data (eg, student data, protected health information, etc). Ethical concerns span bias, plagiarism, ambient clinical documentation and grant/publishing rules. Vendor platforms increasingly embed AI, requiring literacy and risk-based evaluation. Many called for training at scale, transparent roadmaps, and a “path-to-yes” leadership approach that accommodates research speed while safeguarding compliance and sustainability. One emergent theme within the topic suggested a “values paradox” for the university, inferring that the environmental impact of AI may conflict with an institutional focus on sustainability.

Q4 Representative quotes

- “I think we are over here in the inflated expectations part [of AI hype] and we need to get further down there to actually [understand] what is realistic.” (S1, DoIT)
- “AI is a powerful tool ... [and] it can be misused quite easily ... I think you can come up with some real bad answers and quotes on that [topic]. I have no solution, but this is what we are seeing, and it is kind of Wild West right now.” (S1, Distributed IT)
- “How can we build up AI literacy on campus so people know what tools we have? And what are the reasonable expectations and so we don’t have groups finding their own license and their own tools, and we are trying to trim up those fantastical things that work nice, but fall apart when they meet reality?” (S3, DoIT)
- “There are different experiences around campus, but university-wide, I also haven’t felt that there’s this ... initiative or drive across campus to make [AI] embedded in our work [compared to] using Microsoft Suite, or Workday. There’s a lot more intentionality with those other things to make it a part of our daily tasks, and that hasn’t really come to any fruition yet with AI tools.” (S4, Distributed IT)
- “I appreciate the thoughts that were shared earlier about the concerns, because that is a lot of what we talk about, but also ... I think as an institution, one of the things that we might want to consider, and certainly as a division, is how do we want to get ahead ... with the rollouts in terms of training? And whether that’s actual people doing it or making resources available ... [and facilitating] the natural instinct for folks to explore with guardrails that we can provide.” (S5, DoIT)
- “One of the challenges is that we’re not looking at [AI] from a bigger picture perspective around adaptability for emerging technology. It’s generative AI today, but what is it going to be tomorrow, essentially? And I think that we’re not asking the question of ‘what is the path-to-yes?’” (S6, Distributed IT)

- “I had a teenager tell me correctly that AI is for assisting, not for creating. I was like, that’s the line we need to share with people. And then from a research perspective, there was still a lot of confusion around what is acceptable for use and what is not safe yet still.” (S8, Distributed IT)
- “AI feels like it’s something that’s being done to us rather than being done by us.” (S8, Distributed IT)
- “I don’t know if you would call [AI] a strategic pillar [of the university], but obviously a major initiative, and so is sustainability. And it makes me wonder if there is such a thing as ‘sustainable AI’ ... and whether there’s an opportunity here for the university to help define [and lead] what that might be.” (S8, Distributed IT)

Q4 Copilot-generated insights

- Publish AI use guidelines (data classes, tool capabilities, token limits) and training plans.
- Create ethics review patterns with fast lanes for low-risk scenarios.
- Track vendor AI features and integrate risk assessments into procurement.

Q5. What steps can we take to improve understanding and support between distributed and central IT?

Q5 Key themes

- In spite of differences shared between central and distributed IT, participants from both groups were interested in promoting greater awareness of each other’s roles and priorities. Working toward supportive, mutually beneficial relationships was often referenced as an essential theme for identifying and acting on common interests — and with the specific goal of better supporting the IT needs of faculty, staff and students.
- There is a desire for regular, two-way forums, liaison programs and engineer-to-engineer level exchanges to bolster IT community engagement and workforce development. This included more formal and informal spaces for central and distributed IT professionals to engage and connect while learning with and from one another (eg, communities of practice, job rotation program, symposia, monthly/quarterly events, IT conference planning and participation).
- Distributed IT stakeholders want to be engaged and included in efforts that shape strategic designs and decisions.

- Participants from both central and distributed units saw value in improving the central-distributed IT landscape. They suggested creating university-level service roadmaps and service catalogs to help identify service owners and points of contact for both DoIT and distributed IT support. These steps were seen as a viable strategy for clarifying the distinction between, and improving coordination among, the many university IT support services.

Q5 Narrative summary

Participants discussed the need for more frequent, predictable and reliable engagement strategies to promote more open communication and stronger relationships between DoIT and distributed IT. Cited examples include two-way forums across levels (eg, CIO Listening Session format, IT Symposium) and an interest in a DoIT-distributed IT liaison network. Distributed IT also mentioned the value of clearer and transparent options of DoIT service models (eg, pricing, constraints) to inform their choices and decisions about central services. Participant responses also noted a desire for clearer and smoother “front door” navigation of IT support services, calling attention to communication practices, customer responsiveness, and perceptions about staff capacity and workloads. Calls for shared prioritization and mechanic-to-mechanic communication channels reflected an imperative to bridge and broker differences between central and distributed IT “cultures.” This was seen as a way to reduce mismatches in service compatibility, promote transparency in decision-making, and accelerate decisions and actions around points of alignment (ie, priority projects, initiatives, etc). In general, empathy + transparency was interpreted as an opportunity for improving communication, increasing collaboration and yielding better university-wide outcomes.

Q5 Representative quotes

- “I wanted to emphasize that ... it looks like people are clamoring for standards, definitions and frameworks. So, I think the challenge to management is defining how we approach things, and defining what the problems are, and definitions of something that people can rally around. And if the definition is wrong, well, conversation will help correct that with feedback.” (S3, DoIT)
- “I don’t know exactly how you do this, but getting ... the technologists in central IT to [better] understand what ... education and research actually look like ... I deal a lot of times with [central IT professionals] who clearly have never interacted with a faculty member.” (S6, Distributed IT)
- “Instead of [central IT] being seen as someone who is offering local support and capacity ... [try] doing things to directly support my research, to be responsive to people when they need it, and immediately ... when [researchers] talk to different people in the central IT organization ... there’s not a lot of shared experience, right? So, a lot of the central IT organization comes from supporting administrative units who have very specific missions, very specific worldviews, tools, and technologies.” (S6, Distributed IT)

- “I came from distributed IT and joined [DoIT] two years ago. One of the things I think we need to be careful of is the expense of some [DoIT services]. DoIT services are phenomenal, they are bulletproof ... and they are often three times more [than the cost of what] I could do myself in the [distributed IT] department. And then I can’t justify using the [DoIT] service anymore. [The affordability] has gotten better over time ... ” (S3, DoIT)
- “Really great to meet other people in other divisions. So having that dedicated, informal, conversational space for people to just chat with each other about whatever. They wanted to, because we’re all, like, huge geeks about IT stuff, and so we have that in common. That worked really well, and maybe we just don’t have enough of that structured, unstructured time available to us.” (S4, DoIT)
- “I think one of the things that can improve understanding and support between distributed and central IT is to understand what some of the priorities are in each of our schools, colleges and divisions. And then maybe ... work together to figure out a prioritization of what those priorities might look like in terms of consuming some of those central resources that I think we all depend on ... I do think that understanding what those shared priorities are across campus is important.” (S6, Distributed IT)
- “I find myself wishing there were small committees dealing with services within the central services so we could give feedback. I’ve heard the word ‘socialized’ so many times. I think it’s the wrong use of that word ... I’ve read that as one-way communication. ‘We’re going to tell this to people, so they feel comfortable with it.’ I want there to be more two-way conversations.” (S8, Distributed IT)
- “How do we be as flexible as we can with the central systems and tools to allow us to connect to other systems and tools that may meet that last-mile problem? ... There’s never going to be a ‘one-size-fits-all solution’ to most problems, but is there a solution that gets us 80% of the way there, and we can connect a different system that gets us the rest of the 20%?” (S8, Distributed IT)

Q5 Copilot-generated insights

- Fund IT liaison roles.
- Create and sustain regular bidirectional forums that promote “mechanic-to-mechanic” conversations (eg, engineer-level exchanges).
- Publish a university-wide service catalog (including ownership, points of contact, etc).
- Work to promote closer, shared alignment between central IT priorities and IT priorities in schools, colleges and divisions.

Section 2 – Analysis of Padlet data using Copilot-generated insights

The thematic analysis of Padlet data from eight CIO Listening Sessions revealed several systemic patterns across UW–Madison’s IT landscape. Responses clustered around 10 overarching domains, reflecting both operational challenges and strategic aspirations:

- **Governance & strategic alignment:** Participants emphasized the need for stronger prioritization frameworks, transparent decision-making and enterprise-level coordination. Calls for centralization and shared services suggest a desire to reduce duplication and improve efficiency, while change management surfaced as critical for sustaining adoption.
- **Community engagement & workforce development:** Culture and collaboration emerged as dominant themes, underscoring the importance of human-centered leadership and inclusive practices. Respondents highlighted gaps in professional development, requesting expanded training opportunities and communities of practice to foster cross-unit knowledge sharing.
- **Administration & operational efficiency:** Resource constraints were a recurring concern, with limited budgets and staffing cited as barriers to innovation. Process improvement initiatives, licensing challenges and workflow automation were frequently mentioned as levers for operational resilience.
- **Infrastructure & identity management:** Security and risk management remain high priorities, alongside modern endpoint provisioning and cloud strategy. These themes indicate a push toward scalable, secure infrastructure capable of supporting diverse needs.
- **Ethics, compliance & policy:** Accessibility compliance and AI governance surfaced as pressing issues. Respondents expressed uncertainty around regulatory obligations and ethical boundaries for emerging technologies, signaling a need for clear institutional guidance.
- **AI & emerging technologies:** While enthusiasm for AI productivity tools was evident, concerns about misuse, policy gaps and environmental impact tempered optimism. This duality reflects a tension between innovation and responsible stewardship.
- **Research & data ecosystem:** Themes related to research computing and data governance highlight the demand for high-performance infrastructure and trustworthy data pipelines. These capabilities are viewed as foundational for advancing scholarly and administrative analytics.
- **Services & support experience:** Feedback pointed to fragmented support pathways and inconsistent service standards. Participants advocated for unified ITSM platforms and transparent Service Leadership Agreements (SLAs) to enhance user experience and accountability.

- **Teaching & learning technologies:** Instructional tooling — such as LMS enhancements and classroom A/V — was identified as an area for scaling innovation. Respondents stressed the need for solutions that integrate seamlessly into pedagogical workflows while enabling greater accessibility.
- **Sustainability & environmental impact:** Environmental considerations of AI and data center operations emerged as a novel but significant concern, reflecting growing awareness and concerns about technology’s ecological footprint.

Overall, the data suggests an IT ecosystem navigating the interplay between modernization and resource constraints. Strategic priorities center on governance, workforce development and infrastructure modernization, while emergent themes — such as AI ethics and sustainability — signal evolving institutional values. The prevalence of community-oriented language indicates that cultural cohesion and transparency are perceived as prerequisites for technical progress.

Discussion

Data limitations

Findings generated from any data source, including this one, are not without limitations. The analysts identified three factors that may have influenced the accuracy of the collected data or the reliability of the findings.

1. **Errors or omissions in transcript data:** Transcript data were generated either by professional captioners or transcription software. While analysts believed the transcripts were generally accurate, some small segments were omitted or inaccurate due to human error, noise, microphone quality or speaker distance. The analysts used their familiarity with the sessions, context from raw data, and technical experts to address omissions or errors.
2. **Analysts’ chosen methods:** Unlike Padlet submissions, transcript data reflected the live discourse. The CIO often engaged with participants to offer commentary, reflect on what he was hearing and ask clarifying questions. That discourse added rich value to the information quality. Discourse analysis could have been a helpful method for examining transcripts, but it was not their primary focus for this analysis. Instead, they concentrated on thematically exploring participants’ thoughts, ideas, experiences and opinions. As a result, the analyzed data sets may lack factors that inform the context of the discourse.

3. **Use of Copilot to assist with coding data:** While Copilot was a useful tool for working with data at different stages, the analysts used it cautiously. At times, analysts identified inaccuracies and inconsistencies in AI-generated content. When they identified inaccuracies, the analysts double-checked the results against the raw data to verify accuracy.

Despite these potential limitations, the analysts believed that the summarized data demonstrate a dependable method for systematically gathering, interpreting and synthesizing shared information.

Future directions

The findings in this report offer a reliable summary of themes that emerged within and across the sessions. As an empirical source of information, the findings are intended to inform IT priorities, strategies and decisions.

The findings offer opportunities to explore key issues raised in each topic. The data can also be used to promote deeper analysis and debate about how key issues shape the university IT landscape. For example, this dataset could serve as a foundation for deeper exploration of key issues that emerged (eg, IT governance strategy, differences between DoIT and distributed IT perspectives on issues, etc). Additionally, the Copilot insights offer unique opportunities for IT administrators or the broader IT community to deliberate on the merits and viability of suggested strategies.

Appendix A. Data collection & analysis methods

Data collection

Facilitated focus group research design partially inspired the structure and format of listening sessions. Each 90-minute session was facilitated by the CIO and a team of two facilitators. At the beginning of each session, the facilitators and the CIO introduced themselves and provided an overview of the session format. Then, the CIO posed a question to the audience and solicited engagement from participants.

The selected approach to facilitating sessions served two primary purposes:

1. It allowed the CIO to directly engage with members of the IT community on a range of topics and in a manner that stimulated natural dialogue.
2. The format of listening sessions enabled a team of analysts to systematically gather and analyze empirical data generated from session transcripts and Padlet submissions.

The protocols used by a team of analysts to identify themes and synthesize findings are described in detail below.

Transcript data

Transcript data included individual participant responses shared verbally during the sessions. This data set included individual responses from participants, extracted from a transcript generated during listening sessions. For in-person listening sessions, transcripts were generated by a contracted language professional who provided live captioning during the event. For virtual listening sessions, a transcript was generated by the live captioning feature of the virtual meeting platform (ie, Zoom). After each session, a member of the coordination team saved transcripts and uploaded them to a file location with controlled permissions. In total, seven transcripts from eight listening sessions were available for analysis. The transcript from Session #2 (S2) was unavailable for coding and excluded from the transcript data sample.

A total of 189 individual records were included in the analysis of transcript data. Individual records included any perspectives, ideas or experiences shared verbally by participants during the listening session. Each individual response was also identified by session number, question topic, and two main types of attendees (ie, DoIT, distributed IT). Any data that was not identified as a verbal response from participants was excluded from analysis. As a result, the findings exclude any commentary made by the CIO during listening sessions or any participant responses submitted via Padlet or read aloud during listening sessions.

Padlet data

During the sessions, participants also had the opportunity to share thoughts, perspectives, ideas and experiences via Padlet. Incorporating this online interactive tool enriched opportunities for broader engagement. First, it preserved the opportunity for participants to share real-time responses in an anonymous format. Second, it created a parallel mechanism that accommodated individual engagement preferences. Padlet expanded participant engagement without needing to speak in front of the entire audience (eg, sharing in the room, turning on their mic and camera).

A total of 528 records were included in the analysis of Padlet data. This data set included all individual text-based responses submitted during listening sessions. Text submissions were also identified by session number question topic, assigned response number, and number of “upvotes” or likes. The text-reply function was disabled in Padlet for each session. Therefore, participants could not reply to others’ comments except via up-voting.

Data analysis

The team of analysts took the following steps to prepare each of the data sets for coding and analysis. First, analysts exported each data set to a Microsoft Excel workbook for cleaning and sorting. Analysts manually reviewed the session transcripts to remove any names of individual participants. During this step, the analysts also used the transcript data to assign non-identifiable, categorical labels (ie, DoIT, distributed IT) to individual responses shared verbally during in-person sessions.

We made this methodological choice for two reasons:

1. It enabled analysts to protect participants' identities.
2. Using a flexible, general label enabled analysts to examine response patterns within each employment type.

After removing any personally identifiable data, individual responses in the transcript data were then identified and labeled in Excel according to session, modality (in-person vs. virtual) and question topic. Lastly, a unique code was assigned to the data set as a way to distinguish individual responses from participants.

Analysts followed the same protocol for cleaning and sorting Padlet data. The only exception to sorting protocols for both data sets is that Padlet data included the number of upvotes connected to submissions. The number of upvotes was included in the analysis below as an additional way to convey affirmation, agreement or alignment with the submission's content.

Analysts made the methodological decision to code and analyze the transcript and Padlet data independently. This choice was driven by two primary reasons:

1. Analysts acknowledged that each data set, while generated under common conditions, preserved a level of distinct uniqueness — based on *what* information was captured and *how* the information was captured. For example, verbal participation in some in-person listening sessions was higher than in virtual sessions, and vice versa.
2. An independent analysis of each data set led to a more robust approach to identifying, analyzing and validating themes by incorporating qualitative data techniques. Using the constant comparative analysis technique during the coding and analysis phases enabled the analysts to examine and triangulate salient themes within and across both data sets.

In addition to validating themes found within the data, this approach also enabled the analysts to explore nuances of meanings within themes and identify representative quotes from the transcripts.

The team of analysts used a parallel protocol to code participant comments and identify themes within each data set. The analysts' protocols incorporated a non-dependent, highly selective use of a university-approved AI tool — Microsoft 365 Copilot Chat. First, Copilot was used to identify initial codes and themes from participant response data, based on keywords and phrases. Then, Copilot was used to generate broader thematic categories and descriptions of related codes. Additionally, Copilot was used to selectively generate sections of the findings' narrative summary. Finally, Copilot was incorporated as a "thought partner" to offer insights on themes, according to each of the question topics.

All Copilot-generated content was reviewed by the team of analysts using routine accuracy checks. Analysts shared findings with the listening session planning team to review for potential errors or inaccuracies. Analysts also compared any Copilot-generated themes, summaries and quotes against the raw data to generate the final narrative. Incorporating these accuracy checks at different points throughout the methodology helped systematically identify, reconcile and address any discrepancies that emerged between human-driven data analysis and AI-generated analysis.

From both methodological and epistemological vantage points, analysts leveraged AI as a strategy to supplement — rather than supplant — their own formal training in qualitative and quantitative research methods.

About the “distributed IT” term: We use the phrase “distributed IT” throughout this report in recognition of its common usage in the university IT community. However, while the phrase is widely used, it is also poorly defined and can mean different things to different community members. For our data analysis, we categorized any participant who was not a DoIT employee as “distributed IT.” Registration data showed that while most participants worked in an IT or IT-adjacent role, a small number had roles outside of IT.

For any questions related to the methods, analysis or findings in this report, please contact Dominic J. Ledesma, PhD (dominic.ledesma@wisc.edu) or Salima Currimbhoy (salima.currimbhoy@wisc.edu).

Appendix B. Thematic categories & codes

This table includes thematic categories and their associated codes that emerged from the data. Each thematic category includes a general description to assist with understanding how groupings of themes were associated with the broader thematic category.

Thematic category name	Thematic category description	Codes
Administration & Operations	This category generally refers to operational efficiencies, resource management and enterprise systems. Themes typically reflect efforts that aim to streamline processes, optimize budgets and modernize administrative platforms.	• Funding & resource constraints • Licensing & vendors • Workflow automation & low-code • Process improvement & Lean • Event management & e-commerce • Digital asset management • Workday transition & ATP • Software licensing & procurement • Student employee scheduling & staffing efficiency • Enterprise systems & integration (Workday/Canvas/etc) • Technical debt & lifecycle management

Thematic category name	Thematic category description	Codes
AI & Emerging Tech	This category generally focuses on innovations tied to the adoption and integration of advanced technologies. It reflects interest in leveraging AI for automation, decision support, and enhanced user experiences while balancing readiness and governance.	• AI productivity & assistance • AI adoption & literacy
Community Engagement & Workforce Development	This category generally refers to cultural cohesion, collaboration and skill-building within the IT community. Themes also represent strategies to foster inclusive communities, improve knowledge sharing, break down silos and invest in professional development (eg, training).	• Community & culture • Silos & knowledge sharing • Training & digital literacy • CRM & engagement • DEI & inclusive culture • Community, training & collaboration
Ethics & Compliance	This category generally addresses regulatory adherence, accessibility and responsible technology use. It also includes institutional commitments concerning compliance with federal laws and policies (eg, HIPAA, digital accessibility), as well as specific ethical issues guiding the adoption and integration of emerging technologies (eg, AI).	• Accessibility & compliance • AI policy & governance • Compliance & data privacy (HIPAA/personal health information) • AI ethics
Governance & Strategy	This category generally encompasses institutional decision-making, prioritization frameworks and organizational change management. It reflects efforts to align IT initiatives with enterprise goals, reduce duplication, and ensure transparent, inclusive governance processes.	• Centralization & shared services • Project & portfolio management • Change management • Governance & decision-making • Budget & resource constraints • Centralization & campus voice • Transparency & strategy & roadmaps

Thematic category name	Thematic category description	Codes
Infrastructure & Identity	This category generally refers to foundational IT systems, endpoint/device management and security architecture. It emphasizes the development and management of resilient, scalable infrastructure and identity solutions that safeguard data and enable reliable access across campus.	• Security & risk • Endpoint & device management • Cloud services & strategy • Identity & infrastructure (Identity & Access Management/Active Directory/network/firewall) • Federation & interoperability
Research & Data	This category generally focuses on research computing, data governance and analytics infrastructure. It includes participant responses associated with high-performance computing needs, trustworthy data pipelines, and robust governance to advance scholarly and administrative decision-making.	• Data governance & quality • Research computing & data • Research data & storage & high-performance computing
Services & Support	This category generally refers to customer experience and service delivery standards, emphasizing transparent Service Level Agreements (SLAs), unified support channels, and responsive communication to improve user satisfaction.	• Ticketing & IT Service Management • Customer experience & communications • ITSM, help desk & support model
Sustainability & Environmental Impact	This category captures concerns about energy consumption, water use and ecological costs of IT operations. It highlights expressed needs for sustainable practices in data centers and AI workloads as a means to align technology strategy with environmental stewardship.	• AI sustainability & environmental impact • AI sustainability
Teaching & Learning	This category focuses on technologies and practices that enhance pedagogy and student engagement. It includes issues and strategies for scaling instructional tools and integrating digital accessibility resources to support faculty and learners effectively.	• Teaching & learning tools • Event registration & noncredit learning • Digital accessibility

Thematic category name	Thematic category description	Codes
Other	A catch-all category for themes that fall outside the established taxonomy of 10 main categories. This classification is used for responses that are unique, idiosyncratic, or too general to map reliably to a strategic domain. It preserves data integrity while signaling areas for potential future refinement of the coding framework.	Represents responses that did not align with any predefined thematic codes. These entries may include highly specific, ambiguous or context-limited statements that lack sufficient detail for classification under existing themes. “Other” serves as a placeholder for uncoded content, ensuring completeness without forcing inaccurate categorization.

Appendix C. Padlet submissions by upvotes

The following table includes a segment of Padlet submissions according to the number of upvotes (ie, “likes”) a comment received during listening sessions. Even though the use of upvotes during listening sessions was voluntary, the analysts opted to include them as an appendix. Analysts interpreted upvotes as a non-formal mechanism for participants to express agreement, endorsement, affirmation or emphasis of another participant’s comment. Upvotes across all sessions ranged from 0 to 9.

Padlet submission	Thematic category (included in Appendix B)	No. of upvotes	Session ID
An enterprise ticketing system that our customers and business partners can use too.	Governance & Strategy	9	S2
Our leadership team is very human-centered, recognizing that people do their best work when they are respected, heard and valued as individuals.	Community Engagement & Workforce Development	9	S5
The discomfort of using [AI] considering the insane environmental impact. There’s a data center threat hovering around Dane County right now, promising lots of short-term jobs but long-term not many jobs, increased electricity costs, and very high usage of our water. I am uncomfortable getting swept up in AI because, if we don’t, we’re behind. But it goes against all my ethics, principles, and standards.	Ethics & Compliance	9	S5
Our tech staff is stretched VERY thin. We’re not able to innovate or upskill with everyone feeling overworked.	Other	9	S7

Padlet submission	Thematic category (included in Appendix B)	No. of upvotes	Session ID
From outside DoIT, it is incredibly hard to find who to contact for information/help/assistance. Finding the right person to help you is a “who you know” and “who do they know” process. It shouldn’t be that hard.	Governance & Strategy	8	S2
Lack of alignment across division departments, lack of prioritization of projects at the division level.	Community Engagement & Workforce Development	8	S3
This is an area fraught with tensions. I am interested in accessing more capabilities with the AI tools we currently expose to staff, but I am also concerned with the enormous energy required to provide these resources. I have heard that the average ChatGPT request uses about the same amount of energy as a microwave running at full power for 3 minutes. How does the University plan to use these tools and meet its sustainability goals?	Ethics & Compliance	8	S5
Create a more uniform set of standards for customer support across DoIT teams. Some teams are very customer service-focused, and others are more focused on the technologies they support. There should be a baseline expectation for how customer service is provided, including SLAs, especially for level 2 and level 3 support teams.	Other	7	S5

Appendix D. Demographics & participation

Registration records were analyzed in aggregate to understand the demographic composition of participants. Records showed broad and diverse participation from the UW IT community. Two of the eight listening sessions included only DoIT employees. Six listening sessions included a mix of DoIT employees and distributed IT. Registration data included employees from 31 units.

- Total sessions: 8 (4 in-person, 4 virtual)
- Total attendance: 356 individual attendees
- Schools, colleges & divisions represented: 31
- 188 attendees contributed verbally (53% participation rate)
- 528 Padlet submissions

Chart 1: Attendees by distributed vs. central IT

The following chart shows the proportion of attendees categorized as distributed IT compared to DoIT employees.

Attendees by distributed/central status

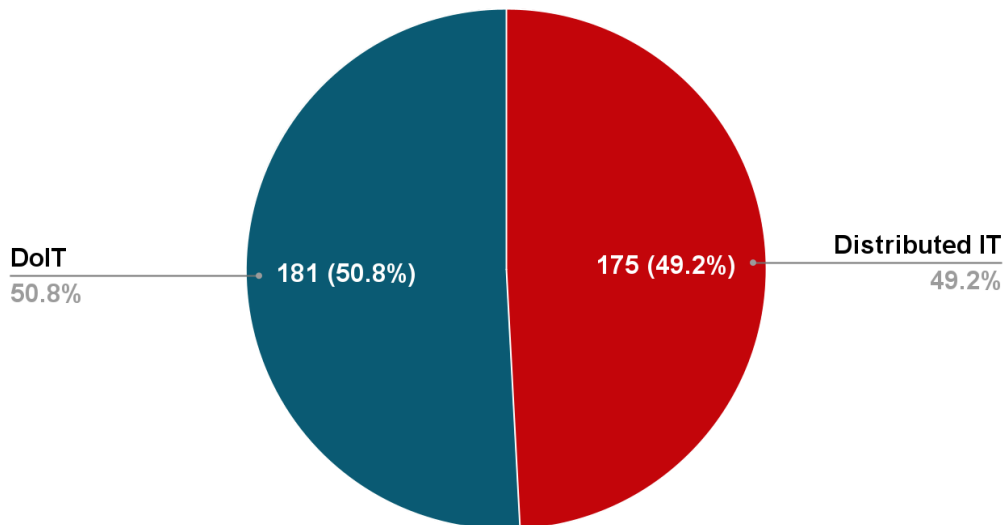
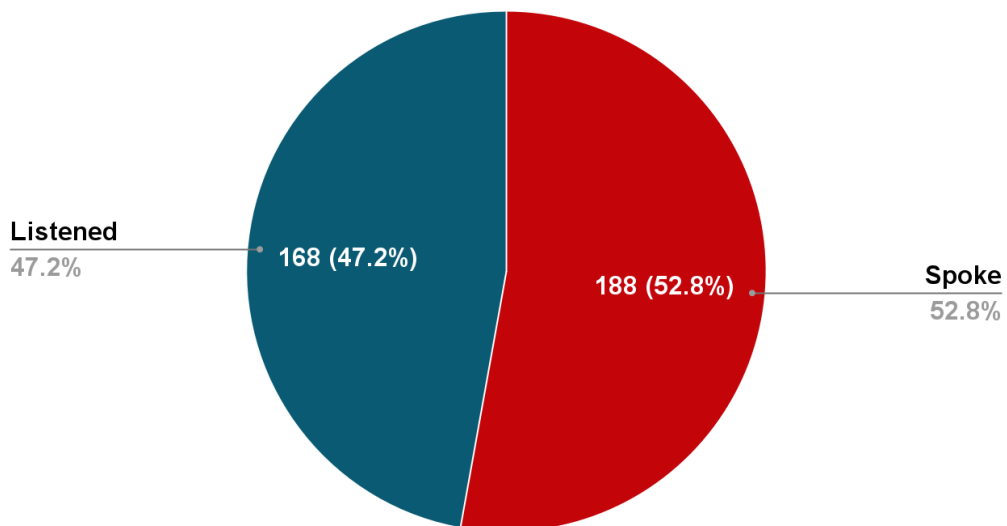


Chart 2: Attendee verbal participation

The following chart shows the proportion of attendees who shared verbal comments compared to those who listened only.

Attendee verbal participation



Appendix E. Attendance data by session

Oct 2 – DeLuca Biochemical Sciences Building

- 50 total registrations
- 32 attendees representing 10 units (82% distributed IT, 18% DoIT)
- 4 cancellations, 10 no-shows

Oct 7 – virtual via Zoom

- 91 total registrations
- 54 attendees representing 18 units (76% distributed IT, 24% DoIT)
- 5 cancellations, 32 no-shows

Oct 14 (DoIT employees only) – Computer Sciences Building

- 60 total registrations
- 52 attendees
- 5 cancellations, 3 no-shows

Oct 20 – virtual via Zoom

- 90 total registrations
- 54 attendees representing 14 units (57% distributed IT, 43% DoIT)
- 17 cancellations, 19 no-shows

Nov 6 (DoIT employees only) – virtual via Zoom

- 100 total registrations
- 73 attendees
- 7 cancellations, 17 no-shows

Nov 12 – Health Sciences Learning Center

- 33 total registrations
- 23 attendees representing 11 units (96% distributed IT, 4% DoIT)
- 5 cancellations, 8 no-shows

Nov 13 – virtual via Zoom

- 104 total registrations
- 65 attendees representing 18 units (57% distributed IT, 43% DoIT)
- 10 cancellations, 25 no-shows

Nov 18 – Education Building

- 40 total registrations
- 24 attendees representing 10 units (87% distributed IT, 13% DoIT)
- 4 cancellations, 12 no-shows

Chart 3: Session attendance by distributed/central IT

The following chart shows the proportion of attendees in each session who were categorized as distributed IT or DoIT employees, based on the preceding data.

Session attendance by distributed/central IT

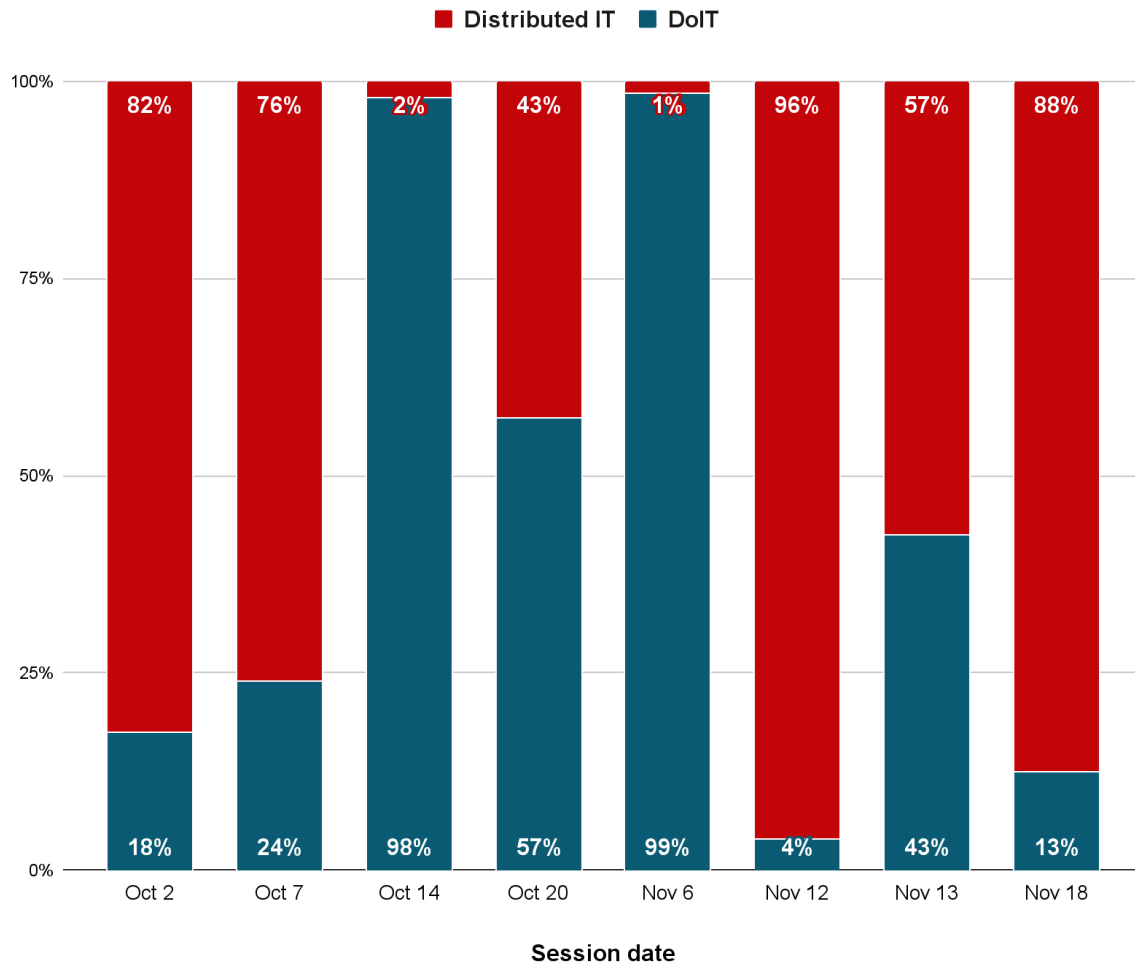


Chart 4: Distributed IT attendees by school, college or division

Distributed IT attendees by school, college or division

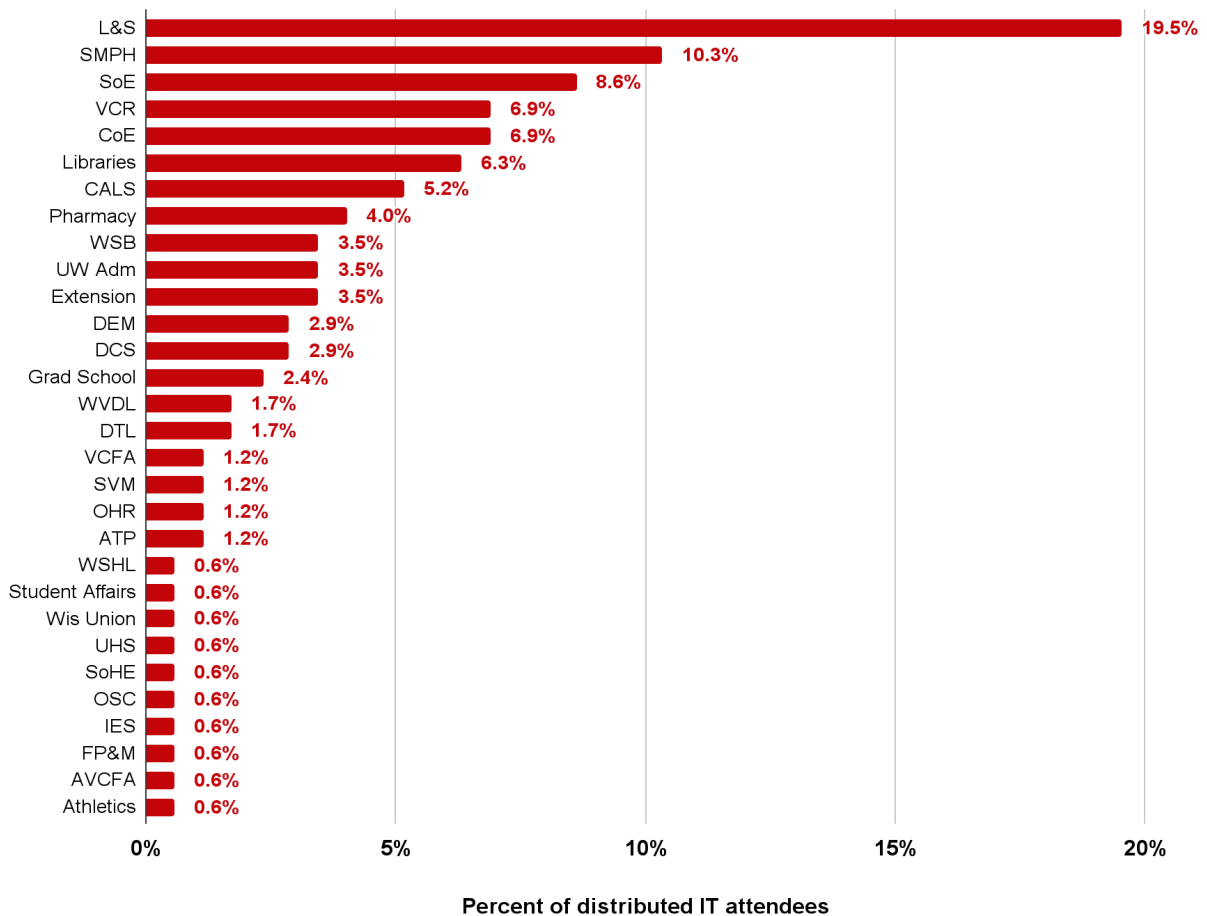


Chart description: Horizontal bar chart displaying the percentage of distributed IT attendees, broken down by school, college or division where they work. The chart shows 30 divisions ranked from highest to lowest attendance percentage.

Top 8 divisions by attendance:

1. College of Letters & Science: 19.5%
2. School of Medicine & Public Health: 10.3%
3. School of Education: 8.6%
4. Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research: 6.9%
5. College of Engineering: 6.9%
6. UW Libraries: 6.3%
7. College of Agricultural & Life Sciences: 5.2%
8. School of Pharmacy: 4.0%

Middle tier (2–4%): Wisconsin School of Business, University Administration, UW Extension, Enrollment Management, Continuing Studies and UW Grad School range from 2.30% to 3.45%.

Lower tier (1–2%): Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, Division of Teaching & Learning, Vice Chancellor for Finance & Administration, School of Veterinary Medicine, Office of Human Resources and Administrative Transformation Program each represent 1.15% to 1.72%.

Smallest representation (0.57% each): 10 divisions, including Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene, Student Affairs, Wisconsin Union, University Health Services, School of Human Ecology, Office of Strategic Consulting, Institute of Education Sciences, Facilities Planning & Management, Associate Vice Chancellor for Finance & Administration and UW Athletics each contributed 0.57% of total distributed IT attendance.

Appendix F. Recommendations for future sessions

Making sessions work

The listening sessions succeeded by creating genuine two-way conversations between the CIO and attendees. The CIO's conversational, approachable style helped build trust and transparency — especially when addressing sensitive topics head-on.

Future sessions should start by setting clear expectations. Let people know how the session will work, how long they'll have to submit comments, and what happens next with their feedback. Then alternate between verbal comments and having facilitators read written responses aloud. With facilitators actively managing the pace, 15 minutes per question hits the sweet spot.

Offering both verbal and written ways to participate helps manage group size while respecting different engagement preferences. Padlet proved effective for this, although the platform's character limit forced some respondents to shorten their comments. We found these Padlet settings helpful:

- Sort responses from oldest to newest
- Disable comments to keep data clean
- Allow people to choose to remain anonymous or sign in to enable follow-up

Finding the right format

Holding DoIT-specific sessions before university-wide IT community sessions worked well. These internal sessions boost staff morale, give people face time with their division leader and create psychological safety to raise concerns. In some ways, they fill the role of an All Staff Meeting.

For virtual sessions, expect limited verbal engagement and plan accordingly. You might offer icebreakers if you want more conversation. Even with high virtual session attendance, the conversation remained manageable, possibly because virtual attendees are more likely to prefer writing their comments to speaking up. There wasn't any sense of competing discussions between Padlet and the room.

Keep focusing on verbal comments and written posts as your primary data sources. While some attendees wanted chat enabled for side conversations, adding chat and breakout rooms would create distractions, give facilitators more to manage, increase risks of disruptive comments, and make analyzing data much harder.

In-person logistics

Hold in-person sessions at venues across campus. Attendees appreciated this approach and said they were more likely to attend when sessions were near their workplace.

Printed QR codes for Padlet and post-event surveys made it easy for people to participate and provide feedback. Use large fonts on nametags to make them easier to read. After sessions, build goodwill by having the CIO send thank-you notes to the distributed IT leaders for the venues, plus the local event and A/V staff.

Evaluate live captioning options for accuracy, cost, speed and availability for in-person sessions. Run tech rehearsals before each session to catch A/V issues early. Station navigators inside and outside buildings to direct attendees, and use a large sign at the registration table.

Rooms with table pods work best — they help people connect and get comfortable. A 50-person cap for in-person sessions hit the right balance, while virtual sessions didn't seem to need attendance limits.

Getting the word out

Success came from using multiple communication channels: email, webpages, newsletters, posters and promoting sessions during standing IT meetings. Individual outreach to distributed IT directors, asking them to spread the word within their teams, also helped.

Let people know what to expect before they arrive. Frame the sessions as can't-miss events by emphasizing the chance to meet the new CIO and get face time during a period of major change at the university.

What's next

Consider hosting more IT community conversations with the CIO — something more structured than weekly office hours but less formal than full listening sessions. Quarterly events focused on timely topics could work well. You might also provide separate spaces for supervisory staff and others.

Appendix G. Project planning & other information

Planning committee & roles

Core planning team:

- Laurel Belman – event management, venue & logistics coordination
- Lauren Bruce – facilitator, strategic communications planning
- Didier Contis – content development, hosting facilitator, CIO participation
- Salima Currimbhoy – quantitative data analysis
- Nick Heynen – communications, photography, editorial review
- Dominic J. Ledesma, PhD – qualitative data analysis, facilitator, content development, methodology design
- Todd Shechter – content development, distributed IT liaison, marketing, facilitator
- Mandy Stib – facilitator, Padlet management, data analysis
- Caitlin Yunis – facilitator, feedback survey analysis

Additional support:

- Bill Bellon – photography
- Brianna Kuhn – virtual event manager
- Justin Masuga – graphic design and visual materials
- Becky Morgan – scheduling support
- Corissa Runde – editorial review
- Daniella Peters – digital accessibility consultation
- Troy Slama – graphic design and visual materials

Project timeline & costs

Planning phase: June–September 2025

- Initial concept development and planning committee formation
- Planning timeline development
- Question development and format design
- Venue selection and technology planning
- Communications strategy development

Implementation phase: October–November 2025

- Eight listening sessions conducted
- Data collection from session transcripts, Padlet submissions and event survey responses

Analysis & reporting phase: December 2025–January 2026

- Data validation, coding and thematic analysis
- Report drafting and editorial review
- Accessibility review and final production

Total project duration: 8 months (June 2025–January 2026)

Total direct costs: \$165

- Live captioning services through the McBurney Disability Resource Center: \$165
- All other work completed by university employees as part of their regular duties

Acknowledgments

The planning committee extends gratitude to:

- IT directors across campus who promoted sessions within their units
- Campus venue hosts and support staff
- Staff from the McBurney Center for live captioning services

Above all, thank you to UW–Madison's IT professionals.

This work only matters because you participated.

We're grateful for the time you took, the thoughtful perspectives you shared, and your willingness to engage in honest conversations about our shared future.

Thank you.