

The Higher Education CIO, 2019

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AUGUST 2019

Key Findings

- **A plurality (29%) of CIOs currently report directly to the president, chancellor, or CEO of their respective institutions; a majority (56%) of CIOs think that they should be reporting to the president, chancellor, or CEO.** The desire for this reporting line is grounded in both pragmatic and strategic concerns: CIOs who report to the president, chancellor, or CEO have greater authority and influence to communicate the strategic importance of IT to the institution's mission and serve the entire institution equally.
- **Non-cabinet CIOs spend more time managing IT operations and services.** CIOs who do not hold a cabinet appointment are more likely to spend their time on these activities than those who do. Those CIOs with cabinet posts are significantly more likely than those without such a role to be engaged with planning and innovation within the IT organization, business and academic units, and governing bodies.
- **CIOs who hold cabinet posts are three to five times as likely to "almost always" engage in strategic activities than are their counterparts without cabinet appointments.** The majority of cabinet-level CIOs are often to almost always involved with discussing the implications of IT decisions with senior leadership and shaping or influencing institutional administrative, strategic, and academic decisions.

Recommendations

- **Reorganize the reporting structure of the institution so that the CIO reports directly and solely to the president, chancellor, or CEO.** A CIO whose organization resides within the purview of the executive office of the institution is in a more authoritative position to establish IT's strategic importance for campus-wide technology initiatives, effectively communicate the contributions of IT to the institutional mission, and provide leadership with the insight and expertise to shepherd the digital transformation of higher education at their institution.

- **Elevate the CIO to a cabinet-level position.** Cabinet-level CIOs will still do the work of the CIO but will be positioned to spend more of their time engaged in strategic activities such as planning and innovation across the institution and serving the larger IT profession. Moreover, CIOs with cabinet appointments have a great deal more impact on their campus. They are able to shape and influence institutional administrative directions, strategic directions, and institutional academic directions more than their peers without a cabinet post.