

College courses available to sign up for fall semester

College students are not the only ones heading back to campus this fall—physically or virtually.

You can take professional skills courses to help you keep current with today’s business environment.

SPRWS continues to partner with Century College to offer continuing education classes to utility employees. Courses start in September and run through December.

A fall class catalog was emailed to staff last week. If you wish to see one and did not receive the email, please contact Sandy Kimbrough at 266-6510 or at sandy.kimbrough@ci.stpaul.mn.us.

Due to COVID 19, the course offerings are more limited than in the past, and many will be offered online via Zoom. Since Zoom is not a city-approved online platform, employees will need to use their own network to participate in Zoom courses.

Students will receive an email by the evening before the class is to run with links to pick up materials, enter the virtual environment, and evaluate the class. Participation is an expectation of enrollment. Attendance will be taken at a variety of points during the session.

Some classes will still be held at the main Century College campus in White Bear Lake. The catalog will indicate location. On-campus classes will be held with

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Rethinking technology governance

Over the course of the past few months, you might have gotten questions from co-workers about your technology needs. These co-workers are part of a newly formed cross functional technology team. They are trying to determine the needs of the business unit they represent to bring these needs back to the larger group for discussion. The cross functional team will then review the stated needs to determine if they are specific to individuals, business units, or exist across the utility. Based on what they find out, the members are charged with providing timely advice and recommendations to an executive team consisting of senior managers.

Both the cross functional team and the executive team are components of new structure called technology governance. This is new way of looking at technology through the eyes of the business units that use it rather than the IT staff that provides it. This is a significant change in thinking about how technology needs are met.

In both the private and public sector, technology systems traditionally have been determined by a small group of professionals who support these systems. However, this has meant this small group has typically determined what technology employees are allowed to use. If an individual or business unit has specific technology needs that are outside of what that IT group supports, the individual or business group makes do with what the IT group allows. At the water utility, the technology allowed an individual has traditionally been determined by a manager or supervisor based on costs, budgets, and their own limited understanding of

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Board of Water Commissioners to hold public hearing on 2021 budget and water rates at 5 p.m. on Sept. 8. Contact Mollie Gagnelius at 266-6275 for SKYPE call in information.

Rethinking technology governance

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technology. That request might never get to the technology staff at all.

Get ready for this to change.

The cross function team is meant to form a cohesive, collaborative, trusting partnership between business units and IT staff and reduce redundant systems and processes.

This group meets at least monthly or more often as needed and consists of one or two members from each division and three from IS. It evaluates and advises on technology issues and requests from all divisions SPRWS. This team determines whether a proposed project or initiative is considered cross-functional and recommends proposed projects to the executive team.

The team does not replace IS staff. It incorporates IS into the overall decision making process and leans on them for technological expertise. IS staff still provide support and maintenance, as well as implementation of new technology.

The cross functional team is a forum for organizational-wide input into recommendations for current and future IT initiatives using consensus. The team makes recommendations to the executive team for the prioritization of technology investment and the formation and updating of an enterprise technology strategic plan.

The team evaluates and ensures that business cases developed for technology requests clearly shows a valid business need and has sufficient information for decision making.

The team will make recommendations for prioritization of all projects in the context of constrained resources. This will include:

- Evaluating how well proposed initiatives fit with the existing portfolio of systems, applications and services.
- Examining and reporting on the potential for proposed initiatives to be used across multiple functional areas, based on enterprise resource optimization, reduction in duplication and improved business processes from the business perspective.
- Providing technical and operational perspectives on potential technology initiatives.

The cross functional team's first effort is to determine the needs of staff working from home and the office during the pandemic and what the utility might be able to provide or is providing to those employees.

If you work from home or office you should expect to receive a survey within the next few days.

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social distancing, face covering, and cleaning protocols in place as mandated by the State of Minnesota, Minnesota Department of Health, and MN State (college system) as they exist the day of class. Individuals coming to campus must take a self-assessment the morning of class prior to arrival. (See information sent out for link to the self assessment.)

Course topics incorporate several timely topics, such the *Impact of Bias and Stereotyping in the Workplace* or *Fostering an Inclusive Environment*. Also new is *Leading and Working in the New Normal*.

The course, *Resilience: Do You Bend or Break During a Challenge?* might be helpful in these uncertain times. You can still learn how to improve your Power Point presentations, sharpen your communication skills, or learn to deal with conflict.

Certificates of completion are awarded after class. On campus classes will receive theirs at the end of class. Virtual classes will be sent after completion of class within ten business days to the email used upon registering.

Classes are offered on a first-come, first-served basis as the utility has two seats available for each course. You must obtain management approval prior to signing up for the course(s) you are interested in.

Once you have obtained approval, send an email to sandy.kimbrough@ci.stpaul.mn.us with the course name, ID number and date. You will then receive an email either confirming your registration or letting you know that the available seats have already been filled.

Additional questions can be directed to Sandy.