

NP 36 - The Hidden Cost of the Wrong Technology

Technology implementation can shape how well colleges and universities support students, but the process is rarely as simple as choosing a platform and turning it on. Behind every successful deployment are questions about data, integration, trust, support, and whether the technology actually helps teams do their work better.

In this episode, we talk with Linda Kucinski, business analyst and liaison between IT and administrative departments at Lawrence Technological University. Linda has spent more than 45 years in higher ed IT, beginning as a student worker and moving through roles including programmer analyst, database administrator, and director of student information systems. Her work gives her a clear view of both the technical side of implementation and the day-to-day needs of the campus teams relying on these systems.

Linda shares what she learned after spending a year trying to make a difficult platform work, including the hidden costs of lost time, low morale, and reduced trust. She also explains why IT needs to be involved from the beginning, what red flags to watch for during vendor evaluation, and what real partnership looks like after a system goes live. Through her experience with Civitas Learning, she discusses how strong technical collaboration, accurate data, and ongoing support can help institutions move from a stalled implementation to a system that supports advising, retention, and better student outcomes.

Show Notes:

[02:39] Linda Kucinski introduces Lawrence Technological University, its hands-on STEM focus, and her 45-year career in higher ed IT.

[04:10] Looking back on early programming, Linda describes working with FORTRAN, IBM punch cards, and the slow process of submitting code.

[06:02] The discussion turns to how dramatically technology has changed, from long compile times to the World Wide Web and today's faster tools.

[07:47] Linda explains how her campus uses data and technology to support student retention, reach students who need help, and manage limited resources.

[09:03] The conversation explores technology overload, system integration challenges, and the need to get more value from the platforms institutions already own.

[10:48] Linda shares the story of a difficult platform implementation that consumed a year of work without producing a usable system.

[12:30] She explains the hidden costs of a failing implementation, including lost morale, damaged confidence, and concerns about whether users would trust the product.

[14:24] Linda describes why IT needs to be involved from the beginning of the procurement process, including demos, security questions, and data conversations.

[15:31] The discussion highlights vendor red flags, including vague reporting promises, hidden technical requirements, and demos that show features not included in the purchased product.

[17:52] Linda explains why direct access to technical vendor support matters, especially when a system depends on institutional data and accurate interpretation.

[18:40] She describes working with Civitas Learning on a new advising system, including sharing SQL scripts and validating how institutional data should be used.

[20:31] Linda talks about moving from a stalled year-long implementation to a six-to-eight-week Civitas deployment that helped rebuild campus trust.

[22:32] The conversation shifts to post-launch support and why a vendor's real value is often tested after the system goes live.

[24:16] Linda explains how continued access to familiar project managers and implementation team members made post-launch questions easier to resolve.

[26:22] She offers advice for IT leaders who are halfway into a struggling implementation and unsure whether to continue or cut their losses.

[27:47] Linda emphasizes the importance of documenting questions, promises, explanations, and vendor conversations in case an institution needs to exit a contract.

[29:25] The episode closes with Linda recommending that institutions include someone who can bridge IT and end-user needs throughout major technology projects.

Links and Resources:

[Civitas Learning](#)

[Linda Kucinski - Lawrence Technological University](#)

[Lawrence Technological University](#)