

EXECUTIVE BRIEFING

Getting Started with a Smart Campus Initiative

Six shared steps for the CIO and the Chief Facilities Officer
drawn from *The Smart Campus Manifesto*

A smart campus does not start with technology. The key starting point for an AI-enabled sustainable smart campus is not simply buying sensors or setting up servers, but creating a shared story (Ch. 8, p. 147). The CIO and the Chief Facilities Officer (CFaO) must first build a culture of collaboration, shared responsibility, and shared action, and attend to people and process alongside initiating technological change.

The sequence below runs in that order. Each step makes the next one possible, and technology does not appear until the fifth.

- 1. Shared trust.** *Build the relationship between IT and OT.*
- 2. Shared vision.** *Leaders agree where the campus is going together.*
- 3. Shared fence lines.** *Separate responsibilities clearly, by agreement.*
- 4. Shared governance.** *Give the partnership binding institutional authority.*
- 5. Shared actions and accountability.** *Run pilots and projects through that governance.*
- 6. Shared story.** *Tell the success broadly to build credibility.*

1. Shared trust: build the relationship between IT and OT

The Manifesto describes the historic separation of IT and Facilities as “a language barrier”: two leaders working “in separate worlds, using different terminologies related to risk, architecture, timelines, and success” (Ch. 8, p. 135). Without trust, the first failure “devolves into tribal finger-pointing: IT blames the legacy hardware, Facilities blames the firewall.” Trust will not appear by itself. Leaders “cannot mandate trust; they must engineer it into the operational culture just as deliberately as they engineer the network” (Ch. 12, pp. 250, 254).

- **Start with the two leaders.** The CIO learns the physics of the built environment; the CFO learns digital governance on the network. Meet regularly, and say openly what each does not yet understand. The Manifesto calls this normalizing the gap, and notes that psychological safety “starts at the top.”
- **Put people in each other’s world.** Network architects shadow a mechanic through the central plant; controls technicians sit in the security operations center. Require joint walk-throughs when any smart building is commissioned (Ch. 12, p. 255).
- **Build a shared language.** A common glossary lets both teams see that an IT service level agreement and a Facilities uptime requirement are the same commitment.

- **Create standing rituals.** A weekly huddle between the IT service desk and Facilities dispatch, and quarterly joint tabletop exercises, keep the relationship from reverting to “transactional email threads.”
- **Protect the trust once earned.** Commit publicly that early data will be used “to fix systems, not to punish people” (Ch. 12, p. 250).

2 Shared vision: leaders agree the destination together

With a working relationship in place, the two leaders “must go beyond their individual roles to jointly craft a shared vision,” ideally with the executive sponsor and Cabinet colleagues (Ch. 8, p. 147).

- **Hold a visioning retreat.** The Manifesto likens it to a “Constitutional Convention” and suggests taking the leadership team off-site. Both leaders arrive with a draft, because people refine a draft more readily than they create one.
- **Unify the vocabulary.** Join “uptime” with “occupant comfort,” and “cybersecurity” with “physical safety,” so one statement speaks for both organizations.
- **Tie it to the mission.** The draft should link technology and sustainability to institutional priorities. One of the Manifesto’s five model statements reads: “We will modernize the campus as one system—combining operational excellence with digital governance—so performance improves continuously rather than episodically, and trust grows with every phase” (Ch. 8, p. 148).
- **Treat the result as a commitment.** The Manifesto calls this a “Declaration of Interdependence”: a pledge to the Board, the Cabinet, and the community that digital and physical assets now form one whole (p. 149).

3 Shared fence lines: separate responsibilities clearly

A shared vision does not mean blurred ownership. The Manifesto warns that “many of the fiercest conflicts in a smart campus deployment are not technical; they are deeply political,” and that digitizing the physical environment means “renegotiating invisible boundaries” (Ch. 12, p. 258). The fence lines both leaders draw together let each side act with confidence. The Manifesto’s own division of responsibility is a sound starting point:

CIO’s side of the fence	CFaO’s side of the fence	Gates between them
Identity and access, network segmentation, vendor remote access, data governance	Safety standards, uptime, commissioning, maintenance, lifecycle planning	One cyber-physical risk register; joint incident playbooks; shared KPIs
Priorities: confidentiality, integrity, availability	Priorities: safety, reliability, availability	Agreed rules for when one priority yields to the other

- **Decide before the system is switched on.** “Do not wait for a conflict to occur.” Use a RACI matrix to define who owns the algorithm, who owns the sensor, and who has authority to override (Ch. 12, p. 258; Guide to RACI, Appendix p. 413).
- **Settle the known flashpoints early.** The Manifesto names three: who controls naming conventions, who controls setpoints and schedules, and who defines an alarm threshold.
- **Frame it as stewardship.** The aim is to move the culture from “domain ownership” to “enterprise stewardship.” The Appendix lists CTO and CFaO responsibilities in full (p. 391).

4 Shared governance: give the partnership institutional authority

Trust, vision and fence lines rest on two people until they are institutionalized. The Smart Campus Steering Committee makes them durable and enforceable (Ch. 9, pp. 158–163).

- **Co-chair it.** Joint leadership by the CIO and CFaO “demonstrates complete equality between the digital and physical sectors.” Suggested members include the CISO, the controls director, the network architect, the campus planner, the data and privacy officer, and representatives from sustainability and procurement.
- **Give it binding authority and a neutral reporting line.** It is a “working legislative body,” reporting to the Cabinet through the COO with a dotted line to the Provost, so it is neither an IT committee nor a building committee.
- **Set the first shared rules.** No connected device is purchased without committee approval, and every capital project passes a “Digital Readiness” review against the campus Division 25 standard.
- **Agree how disagreements end.** The CISO holds a veto over anything that cannot be secured; the CFaO can grant a documented waiver, with mitigation, for critical legacy systems (p. 162).

5 Shared actions and accountability: pilots and projects through governance

Only now does technology enter, and the committee jointly owns and sanctions every action.

- **Discover together.** Pair a network engineer with a facilities mechanic to audit connected OT, give each asset one shared identifier, and build the dependency map. “You cannot optimize, secure, or govern what you cannot see” (Ch. 14, pp. 280–281).
- **Secure and standardize together.** Segment the OT network, bring vendor access under enterprise identity, and adopt one data ontology, with Facilities confirming that security controls do not disrupt plant operations (Ch. 3, pp. 51–52, 65).
- **Choose a pilot that can win.** The Manifesto recommends against starting with “the most complex, politically fraught system.” Solve a visible, widely disliked operational headache first, then prove value in a single “Lighthouse” building before scaling (Ch. 12, p. 258; Ch. 14, pp. 284–285).
- **Measure with shared KPIs.** While IT is rewarded only for network uptime and Facilities only for energy reduction, “they will remain misaligned.” A shared dashboard should show the health of the whole system (Ch. 12, p. 255; Ch. 18, p. 340).

- **Report as one.** The two leaders present one risk register and one scorecard to the Cabinet each quarter (Ch. 9, p. 163; Ch. 17, p. 328).

6 Shared story: tell the success broadly

Credibility is what funds the next phase. The Manifesto notes that “nothing bonds people together like success,” and that operational victories “are often invisible unless something breaks” (Ch. 8, p. 145; Ch. 12, p. 252).

- **Run a communication plan.** Agree on consistent messages and a schedule: town halls, dashboard reports, sponsor updates, the President’s communications, and a smart campus page. Report “successes and challenges” alike, since candor is what builds stakeholder trust (Ch. 8, p. 151).
- **Credit both teams at once.** “Celebrate the network engineer and the mechanic on the same stage” (Ch. 12, p. 255).
- **Translate for the Board.** Tell the story in terms of institutional continuity, avoided cost, and duty of care, not protocols and equipment (Ch. 5, pp. 92–94).
- **Use proof.** At Northern Arizona University, the digital twin identified more than \$200,000 in avoidable costs within six months, and trust among trades staff shifted “from anecdote to analytics” after the data revealed leaks they had ruled out (case study, p. 422).

At a glance

Step	What the two leaders do together	Evidence it is working
1. Shared trust	Learn each other’s domain; set up cross-shadowing and joint rituals	Teams ask each other for help before problems escalate
2. Shared vision	Hold a visioning retreat with the sponsor and Cabinet	One vision statement both leaders present
3. Shared fence lines	Agree ownership, priorities, and override rights	Signed RACI; flashpoints settled in advance
4. Shared governance	Charter and co-chair the steering committee	Purchase rule and capital gate in force
5. Shared actions	Run the audit, security baseline and first pilot jointly	Shared KPIs; one risk register; a pilot result
6. Shared story	Communicate results and credit both teams	Cabinet and Board support for the next phase

Source and notes. Steve Burrell, *The Smart Campus Manifesto*: Chapters 3, 5, 8, 9, 12, 14, 17 and 18, the Northern Arizona University case study and the Appendices. Page numbers refer to the printed pagination. The Manifesto generally uses “CTO”

for the senior technology role; this briefing uses “CIO” for familiarity. The six-step “shared” sequence and the term “fence lines” are this briefing’s framing; the Manifesto covers the same ground under leadership, culture, decision rights, and governance. The “evidence it is working” column is the briefing’s own synthesis.

The *Smart Campus Manifesto, Transforming IT and OT for the AI-Enabled, Sustainable Smart Campus* is available from online booksellers worldwide. For more information and resources, visit <https://thesmartcampus.com>