Executive Summary

This report describes the results from the needs analysis conducted for the Instructional Technology (IT) Department at Utah State University (USU). This study was begun in Fall Semester of 2004 as part of the course InsT 7300 taught by Dr. Nick Eastmond. Dr. Byron Burnham, Head of the IT department, defined the need for this study and was its client. The original study sought to answer four questions:

1. What is the quality of the students?
2. What is the quality of the faculty?
3. What is the quality of the curriculum?
4. What are other indicators of quality within the department?

The Logan and Davis County students involved in this project were divided into four main groups to conduct this study. The groups sought data from:

1. Alumni
2. Faculty
3. Current Students and Employers
4. Institutional Data Sources

These data were collected via web based survey, direct interview, telephone interview, and through data mining. Data were collected and analyzed by these groups. These reports were to be compiled for a final report. The production of this document was delayed to allow for reanalysis of several of the data sources. All data contained in the current report have been reanalyzed by Shane DeMars. Editing and analysis review was conducted by Matt Barclay and Nick Eastmond.

Data are presented here for Alumni, Faculty, and Current Students. Employer responses were excluded from reanalysis due to insufficient sample size but are included in the study's **integration** section. Inclusion of the institutional data would have produced no value added; *ergo* this data was excluded from this document.

Faculty Quality
The overall perceived quality of the faculty is high in the areas of collegiality, care for students, and knowledge. Furthermore, faculty highly valued their amicable work environment. Diversity of the faculty has increased along cultural, ethnic, and gender lines, but has decreased in some areas of expertise and experience. There is also concern that faculty may be too quick to agree with each other.

Student Quality
Student quality is variable. Overall information seems to indicate that the quality of M.Ed. students in increasing. This may, however, be at the expense of a perceived decrease in M.S. student quality. Doctoral student quality is variable. There has been a consistent high quality of students with aspirations to work in academia and to certain projects in the department, but a noted decrease in the quality or application by those interested in industry among doctoral students.

Curriculum - General
There are four general conclusions concerning the curriculum at large in all academic programs offered in the IT Department. First, the ability to apply skills was seen as a benefit to students and alumni, but there was general concern that there is not enough application of learning. Employers noted a decrement in ability of graduates to apply skills, students relayed the need for increased opportunity to apply knowledge and skills. This includes **not** only instructional development skills,

but also the application of knowledge from readings and more theoretical work.

Second, is the decrease in basic skill abilities. This was noted by employers, and faculty. Proposed reasons for this include an overdependence on reading as a form of instruction, little opportunity to apply and practice, and an overemphasized focus on skill integration before skill acquisition.

Third, is a lack of integration and alignment of courses. This point is heavily influences by the preceding two. The lack of integrated instructional objectives between courses, and alignment of courses, may be one reason that many students are perceived as lacking abilities.

Lastly, there has been a reduced emphasis of business skills in the curriculum. Nearly all depressed quantitative responses from alumni were related to business skills. These were further supported by qualitative responses from alumni, current students, and some faculty. Particularly cited were the needs for evaluation skills, and project management skills. (Quantitative data centered on implementation and management of instruction, but these areas were not specifically mentioned in qualitative responses.)

Curriculum - Programs
No blanket statement can be made about the quality of the M.Ed. curriculum, except that there is a perceived lack of instructional variability offered in the courses. Many are seen as lacking dynamic presentations, and sometimes **feedback**. The M.S. program seems to be in flux. There is a marked decrease in business emphasis within the

curriculum. There seems to be an erosion of the students' ability to apply skills; especially basic skills. Further, there is a perception that the M.S. coursework does not prepare students for advancement to doctoral level coursework.

The Ed.S. degree has a purpose and structure not generally known by most faculty within the department, and some faculty commented that it should be considered for removal.

The Ph.D. curriculum has its greatest strength in its flexibility, but this flexibility may also lead to student attrition. There is a sentiment among students and alumni in favor of increasing the research focus of coursework. Current students were further concerned with faculty's use of some instructional methods, and the ability of students to apply learning.

Recommendations
Based on the reexamination of the data from this study six recommendations are presented.
1. Articulate and express a vision for each academic program, then align program core courses with this vision and each other.
2. Increase application of coursework, once students are prepared for the tasks.
3. Develop a plan for recruiting students.
4. Increase the research focus in Ph.D. program.
5. Focus on business application in M.S. coursework
6. Foster an acceptance and valuation of critical feedback and constructive confrontation within relationships in the department.