JANUARY 2026

FUTURE OF TENURE & PROMOTION SESSION SUMMARY

PIT-UN Summit

PRESENTED TO

Public Interest Technology University Network

PRESENTED BY

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Futures and Innovation

WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

Workshop Overview

Fourteen PIT-UN practitioners were selected by conference organizers to participate in this one-hour futures workshop during the 2025 PIT-UN Summit. The workshop examined how faculty evaluation criteria could better align with PIT-UN goals and objectives. The session introduced participants to two strategic foresight tools that provide a foundation for developing present-day strategies, helping stakeholders understand how they can contribute to future tenure metrics. The workshop was designed to surface insights that can inform subsequent activities and workshops.

What is Strategic Foresight?

Strategic foresight is a systematic, participatory, and proactive approach for exploring plausible futures to inform forward-thinking policies, strategies, and decisions. It employs various tools and methodologies to help people understand the forces shaping local, national, and global systems and their potential evolution over time. Rather than focusing solely on past and present problems, strategic foresight addresses emerging future challenges.

Strategic foresight does not predict the future. Instead, it uses future scenarios to assist organizations in developing and testing strategies in plausible futures. This approach reveals which strategies remain resilient across various plausible futures. While we cannot predict what will happen, we can shape outcomes by implementing strategies and policies that guide us toward preferred futures.

01 **Blue-sky Visioning**
20-minutes envisioning PIT faculty characteristics

02 **Backcasting**
20-minutes identifying pathways from future to present

03 **Report Out**
20-minutes sharing insights and themes

BLUE-SKY VISIONING

Blue-sky visioning is a tool that helps stakeholders identify "preferred" futures and develop policies and strategies to achieve them. In this exercise, participants worked in pairs to write a citation for an award-winning Public Interest Technology (PIT)-focused faculty member. This allowed participants to envision criteria for a future faculty excellence award, with these criteria directly informing tenure and promotion standards.

The input generated by workshop participants during this exercise revealed "preferred" futures made up of five key themes and potential elements of a comprehensive vision where technology is designed, governed, and deployed to serve the public interest, creating a transformative ecosystem that prioritizes justice and community impact.

Bridging Sectors
Connecting education, policy, and practice

Justice & Democracy
Rooted in community needs

Scalable Tools
Infrastructure across institutions

Public Good
Technology for society, not profit

Local Grounding
Responsive to community needs

Vision of a "Preferred" Future PIT Ecosystem

CORE VALUES & IMPACT AREAS

Social Impact

- **People Over Profit In AI:** Prioritizing ethical, community-centered approaches over market-driven exploitation of AI
- **Justice & Public Interest:** Leading broad understanding of justice and championing technology that serves society

Teaching, Research & Service

- **Curriculum:** Establishing and growing PIT majors at universities.
- **Methods:** Collaborative approaches to replicate community-centered transformation.
- **Pathways:** PIT pathways to ensure equitable access for students in grades PK-12 as well as those pursuing associate, undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Policy & Governance

- **Influential Publications:** Research on digital safeguards to democracy cited even in Supreme Court decisions.
- **Federal and State-Level Leadership:** PIT supporters serve on committees at State and Federal levels to secure funding for PIT education.
- **Safeguard Democracy:** Building resilient democratic protections.

Community & Collaboration

- **Multidisciplinary Teams:** Building collaborative groups across institutions to create tools like PIT Connect
- **Community-Led Design:** Developing methods that empower non-technical experts to participate in technology policy and design.
- **Breaking Traditional Boundaries:** Creating shared frameworks that bridge technical and non-technical perspectives.

Tools & Infrastructure

- **PIT Connect:** Futuristic AI-supported platform to help learners navigate education and career opportunities, codify informal learning, and match skills to jobs.
- **Collaborative Infrastructure For Nonprofits:** Building scalable systems to strengthen nonprofit capacity.
- **Public Good Innovation:** Developing tools that connect organizations to opportunities for their products to benefit society.

BACKCASTING

Backcasting connects elements of "preferred" futures to the present by identifying necessary steps for realization. Participants explored key events needed for their envisioned futures to emerge, working backward from 10-year goals through five-year milestones to immediate actions. To identify goals, actions, and outcomes for each 5-year period, participants were asked to consider three key questions:

1. What key events must occur for elements of the "preferred" futures from the blue-sky activity to emerge?
2. What milestones need to be reached within 5 years to achieve the 10-year "preferred" future?
3. What actions should be taken now to increase the likelihood of achieving the 5-year objectives?

Phase 1: Laying a Foundation in 2026 - Near-term Goals		
Reaffirm academic freedom and embed PIT across universities.	Establish PIT majors and secure initial funding streams.	Build strong community and government partnerships.
Key Actions		
• Funding & Endowments: Unlock diverse funding sources to offset federal declines. • Tracking & Metrics: Develop tools to track PIT graduates' career outcomes; report significant increases in PIT roles. • Faculty Incentives: Establish infrastructure and incentives for PIT innovation; evolve promotion and tenure criteria to value PIT work. • Pipeline Development: Organize PIT pipeline networks around democratic technology; scale AI tools for equity and accuracy. • Leadership Pathways: Support PIT faculty and leaders entering political and civic leadership roles. • Partnerships: Expand corporate and community partnerships; encourage creation of state-funded data centers. • Mentorship & Awards: Launch PIT mentoring programs and establish university-wide awards for impactful PIT contributions.		
Near-term Outcomes		
Develop a solid academic and community foundation for PIT, with funding, definitions, and partnerships in place to support growth.		

Phase 2: Expansion & Integration 2030 — 2035 Intermediate Goals		
Scale PIT programs regionally and nationally.	Build infrastructure for faculty innovation and student career pipelines.	Strengthen PIT's political and civic influence.
Key Actions		
• Curriculum & Definitions: Establish PIT vocabulary across disciplines; emphasize interdisciplinarity and community-centered impact. • Faculty Development: Launch PhD programs for PIT faculty and community technologists. • Community Engagement: Initiate focus groups, needs assessments, and formal partnership agreements with nonprofits and local governments. • Infrastructure Mapping: Create faculty expertise mapping tools and pilot occupation mapping. • Research Recognition: Establish PIT research awards with clear criteria.		
Intermediate Outcomes		
PIT is institutionalized across universities, with strong administration and faculty buy-in, measurable student success, and growing influence in civic and political spheres.		

By 2035, PIT becomes institutionalized with measurable student success and strong administration and faculty buy-in.

Phase 3: Scaling Nationwide 2035+ Long-term Goals (Preferred Future)		
Achieve national recognition and scale for PIT programs.	Ensure PIT principles guide new companies, democratic integrity, and community engagement.	Build sustainable infrastructure for long-term impact.
Key Actions		
• Entrepreneurship: Support cohorts of PIT graduates starting companies grounded in PIT principles. • Coursework & Internships: Expand PIT coursework nationwide; secure significant funding for student internships. • Democratic Integrity: Form multisectoral alliances to secure voter registration and ballot distribution. • Community Engagement Hubs: Establish PIT hubs with dedicated staff, postdocs, PhD support, and inclusive engagement methods. • Success Metrics: Create employer and alumni feedback processes to justify national scale. • Corporate & AI Partnerships: Secure access to Empire AI, shared data centers, and faculty lines dedicated to nonprofit engagement. • Multidisciplinary Teams: Build campus programs that form multidiscipline teams to address PIT challenges in partnership with schools and corporations.		
Long-term Outcomes		
PIT is a nationally scaled ecosystem with strong academic, corporate, and civic partnerships, producing graduates who lead companies, help shape democracy, and sustain community-centered technology.		

By 2040, PIT achieves national scale with graduates leading companies, shaping democracy, and sustaining community-centered technology through multisector partnerships and dedicated engagement hubs.

CONCLUSION

This one-hour workshop employed two strategic foresight tools that proved valuable for addressing future public interest technology challenges. The session generated insights that create numerous opportunities for follow-on activities, where additional strategic foresight tools can be applied to develop a resilient long-term PIT strategy.

While the workshop initially focused on tenure and promotion metrics, participants discovered that the ideas may have broader implications across the PIT ecosystem. The interconnected nature of these issues underscores the importance of moving toward a people-centric framework that is responsive to community needs, prioritizes education and workforce development, enhances the various activities in the PIT community, and deploys scalable tools that further connect education, policy, and strategy.