1) What do you see as a big challenge in technology to meet enterprise needs in 2013? If you were to write down a wish list for 2013, what solutions do you look forward to and your expectations from technology providers for the enterprise?

How to integrate cloud-based solutions into the enterprise. The cloud approach opens up the solution set in exciting and interesting ways, but it’s also critical these be deployed in ways that protect enterprise data and ideas/IP as well as where the performance, cost and operational characteristics meet the needs of the enterprise. What enterprise standards and policies make sense?

How to leverage mobile solutions into the product and services structure of the enterprise. Our end users are demanding to be able to utilize their mobile devices to do anything and everything from wherever they are. This needs to be done in a cost-effective and successful manner. This is particularly challenging as our business climate has continued to be tight. Deploying mobility-based solutions which require broadly different technology approaches which drive up costs is problematic. What enterprise standards and policies make sense?

2) Despite the advancement in technology and availability of some cool technology solutions, there isn't a day when we can say 'all is fine.' There are several pain points within the enterprise for which solutions do not exist yet. In your business environment what are some of the solutions not yet there or not up to the mark and you wish solutions would be available to make your job easier. Can you share 1-2 things on what keeps you awake at night?

Information security is hands-down the most challenging IT issue in my opinion. That’s because there is no magic-bullet solution and no way to ensure enterprise data and resources are truly secure. The list of name-brand, well-managed IT operations which have experienced embarrassing/expensive/harmful compromises is long and varied and crosses all industries and economic circumstances. The bad guys are smart, capable, persistent, highly motivated, world-wide, automated and 24/7. We are seriously out-gunned and the challenges can easily overrun our limited staff resources. The good news is there are effective counter-measures, however, these can involve investing large amounts of money, can be highly intrusive and—as I noted—with no guaranty of absolute success.

3) There are several technology trends which you perhaps would be observing. Can you share with us 1-2 trends that will have significant impact on your enterprise business environment.

Greater use of online delivery of course content and entire courses. Most institutions have built their identity, student interactions and alumni relations around a physical campus. How do they build graduate loyalty with the attendant financial and political support when students no longer have that kind of identification with a physical place? Plus faculty accustomed to face-to-face interactions and
feedback can struggle with how to adequately engage with their students if they are not directly delivering the content or aren’t physically in the classroom with students?

The transition to electronic textbooks. Much of the traditional publishing world and business model is tied up with a physical textbook. Physical textbooks can be loaned and re-sold...what does that mean for e-texts? Control of the IP and related pricing models have to be worked out. Does “ownership” of an e-text make sense or do we move to a “rental” model? Does it make more sense for each student have her/his own e-text content on their own device or should the “correct” (current) version be on a server they access? If the latter, what does that mean for networks on and off campus? What will be the e-text impact on classrooms?

4) Over the years, we have witnessed a massive change pertaining to the role of CIOs depending on the organization, the industry, the business strategies, the prevailing market conditions and the financial climate in terms of business value. How would you describe your own role as CIO has changed in the past couple of years?

Less of being a technical guru and more of taking a partnership focus with our customers. Our customers are more aware of how technology can help their operations and what their peers in other enterprises are doing. As the business climate has continued to be tight, we have been much more successful by going in jointly with our functional business partners and making a solid case together for investment of the limited funds available to the enterprise. When executive management hears a common and consistent message jointly from the functional and IT units, we’re in a much better position to get buy-in.

5) With your rich experience of managing IT organization and steering technology for your enterprise, can you please share some of the unique lessons learnt and your advice for fellow CIOs.

Let me focus on three specific things. First of all, it’s important to understand this is a personal business. Credibility and track-record is everything. Secondly, being a reliable, successful partner is a great way to build credibility. My customers have bet the metaphorical farm on leveraging IT for the enterprise. They’ve got to be convinced I’m “all in” and as committed to their success as they are. Thirdly, it’s important to understand that we’re all in Marketing. I need to be “selling” the IT organization to the enterprise and making the case for working with us. Also, I can’t assume my customers know what services we provide or how those can help them solve their problems—I need to tell them and provide marketing materials and testimonials from other customers. And I need to make sure the IT organization is focused on delivering great customer service in a responsive and timely manner.