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ITS Spring Update 2015

Sue Aber

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Dear Trinity Community,

Information Technology Services (ITS) Update

As we begin the spring semester, we would like to share a few highlights of projects completed and currently under development.

Staffing Updates

We are excited to introduce three new members of the ITS team. The enterprise applications group welcomed programmer/analysts Ellen Lombardi and Lucas Carroll, while Sascha Mangs recently joined the Networking and Systems team as a systems administrator. Ellen joins us from Northeast Utilities, Lucas worked most recently at ESPN, but previously at Southern Connecticut College & Sascha joins us from the Connecticut State Colleges & Universities Board of Regents.

Educational Technology

We started off the semester with the unveiling of the new Financial Research & Technology Center, an offering that is somewhat unique to the small liberal arts colleges and one that has been embraced by our students. The financial center holds 11 Bloomberg terminals – computers that are connected to Bloomberg Financial Services. A twelfth terminal remains in the Center for Educational Technology, so that people can access it if there's a class in the Financial Center. Each workstation has dual monitors and a specialized keyboard that is programmed to execute common actions. Students have been excited about this new space which is available to them 24X7. The doors officially opened on September 24th with a well-attended open house. We also had an opportunity to showcase the room during family weekend. While this software is known for use on market portfolio and risk analytics it can be used extensively as a research tool. The investment club has been making their home in the adjoining office. The club is comprised of about 40 members and we have had 98 students set up accounts and already 10 have completed the Bloomberg certification.

ITS has worked closely with the Dean of Faculty Office in establishing the partnership with edX, an open source, nonprofit organization that provides the infrastructure and IT support that will enable faculty to teach high enrollment online courses. This partnership with edX represents an opportunity to publicly promote the quality of the instruction embodied within a Trinity education, enhance our reputation and influence the evolution of online instruction. The ITS team is excited about partnering with faculty in developing the course offerings. Faculty Conference will be establishing a faculty led ad-hoc committee which will be responsible for recommending courses to the Dean of Faculty, and defining the TrinityX program. Official announcement of the partnership by edX will be closer to the launch of initial course offerings.

Just prior to advance registration we introduced an open-source appointment solution that may make setting up appointments with students easier for faculty, advisors, etc. This solution, the Web Appointment Scheduling System, can be found at <http://wass.trincoll.edu> or on the portal on the Academic home page. This system allows anyone with a Trinity ID set up a digital signup sheet, which anyone from on or off campus can use to make appointments. Instructions can be found on the commons website: <http://commons.trincoll.edu/trinedtech/2014/10/24/introducing-wass-the-web-appointment-scheduling-system/>

The Winter Institute for Teaching with Technology (WITT) was held on January 15th, with a focus on delivery of MOOC's. Jason pulled together a great mix of faculty who have taught these high enrollment online courses from Wellesley, Davidson College and the University of Wisconsin, who addressed some of the pedagogical opportunities and challenges the platform offers. They spoke about their experience in connecting with global audiences and promoting engaged students in these large-scale courses.

Our instructional technologists also presented a quick overview of the release of some new features in Moodle, including an improved grade report, an improved attendance module, the ability to enable anonymous forum posts and the ability to display the course in collapsible format. There are also some new tools for working with audio & video files. If you didn't have an opportunity to attend WITT, please reach out to your instructional technologist or stop by and talk with an STA to learn about the new features.

Starting this semester, Russian Studies will be offering three tele-presence courses jointly with Connecticut College as part of a Council for Independent Colleges (CIC) Consortium for Online Humanities Instruction grant. Trinity's Katherine Lahti is offering her translation-focused course, Current Russian Media, and Connecticut College's Laura Little is teaching a course on Russian film. Katherine's Intermediate Russian course is also meeting once a week with their counterparts at Connecticut College via the tele-presence equipment.

Classrooms and Labs

In addition to the Financial Research and Technology Center, four iMacs were added to the Hallden 118 Photography lab, dedicated to Studio Arts, bringing the total number of workstations in the space to ten. These machines run Photoshop and Adobe Creative Cloud, professional design applications supporting photography and news media courses. Several new, commercial quality Canon printers which were acquired by Studio Arts have been added to the space as well. In Goodwin Lounge we replaced the Instructor's workstation (the cabinet) and improved the cable management.

Infrastructure Services

During the January recess the access control team completed placing the new card-only Salto locks on the Jackson dormitory. Underway is the installation of the locks in the chapel and Downes/Williams. We are still evaluating which buildings are next for lock replacement based on needs, equipment failure rates, and opportunities to coordinate with other facilities projects. The tentative plan is to have all first year dorms completed by the start of Fall 2015. The installation of a new sound system for the chapel was also recently completed.

We continue to work with Campus Police to expand Trinity's Video Surveillance system. Over the fall semester we upgraded the backend servers and added more than 30 cameras, many around the first year dorms in conjunction with the locks. Our original TrinFlix video streaming system is close to capacity and we are in the process of doubling its capacity from 6 Terabytes to 12 as well as adding much needed redundancy. The TrinAir authentication backend system was moved to a more flexible modern software to make it more reliable and secure. Existing Cisco VPN service is beyond its useful life. We are just finishing the pilot of the new VPN and will post configuration instructions for the new system to our website soon.

The purchase of 200 Constitution Plaza has created exciting opportunities for Trinity College. We have begun the process of investigating options to provide network, phones, access control, cameras and other required ITS needs for building. The building seems well designed and built, with technology in mind, but much of it needs updating for today's needs.

System Upgrades

During Trinity Days we began migrating faculty and administrative mailboxes to the new exchange system. With this upgrade campus constituents gained a significant increase in mailbox size. Faculty and staff are allocated 1.5 Gigabytes of space up from the previous limit of 300 Megabytes. Students have been allocated 750 Megabytes of space, up from the previous limit of 200 Megabytes. The one remaining limit to increase is on the size of attachments, which we hope to increase very soon. We still encourage everyone to continue to be diligent in deleting mail that isn't needed, but we also recognize this increase in capacity was needed. Our VMWare server cluster was upgraded with added redundancy, which supports many networking backend systems. The last server cluster scheduled for upgrade is Administrative Systems. The hardware has been purchased and is in the final stages of configuration. We hope to begin moving production services to this new cluster over the spring semester.

Administrative & Web Development Initiatives

The admissions office saw many changes to their processes this fall. For the first time, application folders are being read on-line. Nearly 150,000 documents have been loaded into the document

imaging system in support of the 7100+ applications for class of 2019. Several of the admissions officers have commented on how much easier it is to read the applications on-line and how nice it is to no longer have to lug file folders home. In addition, to the online reading process, admitted students will accept their admissions offer on-line for the first time, integrated into that process is the ability to pay their enrollment deposit on-line. These new features were rolled out to ED1 accepted applicants.

Not only has admissions gone paperless, but we worked with the payroll group to offer electronic W2 tax forms. Human Resources also worked on cutting down on paper with the introduction of on-line performance evaluations with the mid-year performance plans, also a PeopleSoft application.

We continue to work on collecting data for the Alumni search feature on the Advising portal that gives faculty information about current jobs our alumni hold. Advisors are able to search by major, industry or geographic location. The data presented is a result of a department sponsored alumni survey that began in fall 2013, seeking alums willing to share their stories on-line, speak with students and/or host internships. This fall, the survey was released to Sociology, Anthropology, Math & Hispanic Studies & we expect to have those survey results included in the database by mid-semester. As part of this initiative we introduced a new web-part that provides dynamic lists of alumni information on department web pages, an example of this can be seen on the Public Policy home page. About a dozen departments have been completed at this time, and we will continue surveying alumni, so please reach out to Rachael Barlow if you haven't already agreed to be a part of the survey process.

Working with J Hughes, Jean-Pierre developed a new web application for presenting college-wide KPI's. The project began with a focus on Admissions & Financial data. The intent is to integrate this into the trustee portal.

Our web development team also continues to work on the development of the new web-parts required for the re-skinning of the college website. They also developed a new process that provides for the on-line enrollment of J-Term Courses.

Data Security

ITS will be introducing a new security newsletter, an idea that Jesse Vasquez has initiated and taken the lead on. We anticipate this being a quarterly publication, with the first newsletter being released in February. In addition to the newsletter, we are ready to release the "Securing the Human" online training. Early February, you will receive an e-mail with information for you to access the training website. It is broken up into modules, that each focus on a particular issue associated with data security. We encourage everyone take the time to login and complete the sections that are related the type of security issues you encounter and the data you handle. The ideas presented are helpful in securing your personal information on campus and at home.

We resumed rolling-out the identity finder application late fall. This tool is used to address best practices in storing and protecting personally identifiable information (PII) such as social security numbers and other sensitive data (credit card numbers and bank account information). When your distributed computing specialist reaches out to make an appointment with you, we appreciate your cooperation in setting up an appointment. The set-up is quick, although the initial scan can take several hours to run, it does so in the background, so you can continue to work. Once it's completed an individual from the Enterprise Application team will assist you in resolving any issues found with the search.

If you have any questions about any of these initiatives I can be reached at ext.2525 or email, Suzanne.Aber@trincoll.edu.

Sue Aber

Director of Information Technology Services & Chief Information Officer