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ITS Spring Update 2014

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Recommended Citation

Aber, Sue, "ITS Spring Update 2014" (2014). *Information Services updates*. 36.
https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/is_updates/36

January 28, 2014

Dear Trinity Community,

Information Technology Services (ITS) Update

As we begin the spring semester a variety of new applications are being introduced to the campus from a new judicial conduct system to a predictive modeling solution for the Advancement Office.

Educational Technology

Our Dean of Faculty's Office and their counterpart at Wesleyan University and Connecticut College have initiated a collaborative effort to expand course offerings at our institutions by sharing resources. All three institutions have seen a growth in the Neuroscience programs and are seeking creative solutions to grow their course offerings to further enrich their curriculum. A course on schizophrenia will be taught this spring by a Wesleyan faculty member and a total of approximately 15 students from all three institutions are enrolled. The professor will be teaching class on the Wesleyan campus, and the Wesleyan students will be in that classroom with him. The 4 students from Trinity enrolled in the class will be participating virtually from their own campus, as will the students from Conn. The Trinity students will meet in the Music & Media classroom, and be connected to the other two classrooms using the Cisco Tele-Presence technology. There will be opportunities for all of the class participants to meet face-to-face, in addition to the classes that will be delivered through the teleconferencing software. The Educational Technology and Systems and Networking team have been working closely with the Deans Office and their counterparts at Wesleyan and Connecticut College to put the technology in place for the spring semester.

The J term offered our first undergraduate hybrid course: "The Godfather: Art of Hard Choices," taught by John Alcorn, principal lecturer in Language and Cultural Studies. His technology-enhanced class replaced some face-to-face classes with a variety of online tools, including multimedia lectures, discussion posts and WebEx videoconferencing sessions. John indicated that the class went well, students were engaged, they had content-rich discussions and overall he was pleased with the outcome.

Our Winter Institute on Teaching with Technology has a new date and time, on the morning of Thursday, February 27th during Trinity Days. WITT will feature presentations on workflows for grading, ideas for working with video, student-built projects such as timelines and exhibits, and simplifying student appointments.

Learning Space Committee & Classrooms

We continue to look for ways to improve support for the software and hardware in our public labs and classrooms. In order to help measure software usage—and thus target our improvements more effectively—we have invested in a product called LabStats, which anonymously reports on what software gets used on a given computer. In addition, this year we will be participating in Educause's annual surveys of faculty and students, to help us better understand technology use on campus. The software, in conjunction with the surveys, will help us better gauge what software should be installed in the classrooms, and how we can help make it run more efficiently.

Upgrades

On January 14th the web site was upgraded to run under SharePoint 2013. This latest version of Sharepoint simplifies content deployment by eliminating the staging server and thus eliminating the fifteen minute delay in pushing approved content to the public website.

As is our standard practice year-end tax updates were applied to PeopleSoft on December 28th. In addition, a number of standard maintenance updates were applied to the PeopleSoft Financials System.

Administrative & Web Development Initiatives

The Common Application, which is used by over 500 institutions for undergraduate admissions caused some anxious moments for the admissions community this fall due to stability problems with their latest upgrade. Trinity, like many other institutions has been using Common app as their sole application process for several years, an online tool that makes it easy for students to apply to multiple colleges & universities with a single application. Prospective students were having difficulty navigating the revised form, when the forms were actually accessible. Following the lead of Princeton University, a decision was made to offer an alternative application called Universal Applications. A few students took advantage of this alternative application process, but in the end the majority of students submitted applications through Common App.

The Admissions Office will be going paperless for the 2014-2015 recruitment cycle. During the fall semester, we evaluated a variety of document imaging solutions and our cross-departmental team selected Image Now from Perceptive Software. During the reading period, Admissions Officers will be reading and annotating application files electronically. Although we receive approximately 7500 applications electronically, they are printed out along with teacher recommendations and transcripts and placed in paper files. Under the new system, there will be an integrated feed with the Common Application directly into the document imaging system. We are excited about this project and work will begin mid-spring semester with an August go-live date. Admissions noted how much technology has impacted their operations, not so long ago they would return from the holiday break to 30 bins of mail

that had to be processed before the reading process could begin. The Development, Accounting and the Registrars Offices currently use a document imaging system called Open Docs, as a second phase of this project these documents will be migrated to the new platform and support of Open Docs will be discontinued. After these first two phases, additional offices including the offices of Financial Aid, the Registrar and Dean of Students will begin using the system as well.

Working with HR, employees now have the ability to view their compensation statements on-line through the PeopleSoft self-service solution. This was introduced to the campus on November 1st, prior to open enrollment. The plan is to provide updated information on a semi-annual basis. The roll-out of the PeopleSoft time and labor feature was completed in December for all office staff with the exception of Campus Safety. We will be working with the payroll group in addressing student time reporting next.

The Dean of Students Office has selected Maxient for management of judicial issues. This system will provide a single on-line location for tracking adjudication of college policy violations by students. A team began working on the implementation of this solution early November, and will go live this semester. Maxient integrates directly with Report Exec, the dispatching software that is used by Campus Safety, which will help insure the integrity of data between the two systems. When complete, we will finally be able to put to rest our home-grown solution, SSITS, which has served the campus well, but is long beyond its prime. In other Campus Safety initiatives we have begun feeding parking citations from the Report Exec system directly into the student billing.

Working with the Dean of Faculty & the Registrar offices a new web-based course management planning tool was introduced this fall that will be used by academic departments to manage and track teaching loads. This planning tool will be used to document courses that will be taught the “next” academic year and identify department staffing requirements. This application will transform the way the Dean’s office tracks teaching loads & offers reporting features that the Deans Office can utilize to provide a comprehensive view and standardizes the flow of information into the office. This project will have multiple phases as we continue to develop features that aid with the flow of information to the curriculum committee for course changes or request for new course offerings. In another project that has been initiated by the DOF Office and the First Year program we will be developing a process to automatically place student in the First Year Seminars, which currently is a manual process performed by the Registrar’s Office. The goal of the project is to place students in their top selections while optimizing the academic goals of diversity and class make-up.

Working with the College Advancement Office we are in the final stages of preparing for the roll-out of a predictive modeling software platform called Reeher that will aid in the identification of prospective donors from both a wealth perspective but also from an inclination to give. This solution is tightly integrated with PeopleSoft extending the use of giving history and our own internal rating system. The system will provide the gift officers with a dashboard that allows for drill-down of constituent detail.

Other major projects for the Development office include the development of a web based application to report on endowed scholarships, eliminating the need to manually prepare detailed reports by our donor relationship and stewardship group. This is part of a larger initiative that replaced a survey tool with an integrated management solution called Academic Works. The final stage of this project is the elimination of an Access database once the development of a bolt-on solution within our PeopleSoft Campus Solutions system is complete.

Data Security

A key initiative of the ITS department is to improve our business practices around data security and to create a greater awareness across campus. As you may recall not too long ago we instituted a practice of requiring passwords on our cell phones /tablets and began the practice of encrypting laptops. Our current security initiative begins to address best practices in storing and protecting personally identifiable data (PII) i.e. social security numbers, credit card numbers, etc.

A security breach that results in the exposure of personally identifiable data can be very costly, both in terms of remediation costs and the college's reputation. There are legitimate reasons to collect and maintain this type of information, but we want to ensure that the data is stored in appropriate locations and we minimize the risk of exposure.

The ITS department has purchased a product called Identity Finder that scans personal computers and servers for personally identifiable information. It works by scanning the contents of files, and provides a report which indicates what documents, emails or files contain potential PII. This tool also provides a variety of remediation options for properly managing or removing the PII. The ITS staff will be reaching out to departments to help download the software and begin the process of scanning desktops/laptops. Our staff will work with individuals in understanding the remediation options. Best practices indicate that data scans should be done monthly at a minimum. Please note that the results of the scan only reside on the workstation.

We will begin working with Administrative offices initially, followed by Academic Departments. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns about this initiative. We appreciate everyone's cooperation with this project.

Infrastructure Projects

We thank the campus for the tolerance and patience as we worked long and hard through a network outage that occurred early October. We experienced a switching failure due to uncontrolled flow of traffic on our network, that caused our switches to dis-connect and in-effect bring all of the services off-line. We have taken several steps to correct the problem, reconfiguration at the source of the problem and made some configuration changes in the switches to prevent this type of incident from occurring again.

In addition to technology upgrades related to construction projects we also enhanced and expanded Wi-Fi coverage on campus to help address the continued and growing influx of wireless electronics such as smartphones, laptops, tablets and other handheld devices on campus. A new entertainment network was introduced this fall for student wireless appliances “ENTERnet”, specifically designed for games, Xboxes, etc. This will help reduce the traffic on Trinair which is designed for academic and administrative uses.

The second phase of the Crescent street projects, buildings 4 and 5 was completed mid-month. As part of the overall construction project we install 583 electronic locks, 58 access points and 73 surveillance cameras.

Working with the Athletic Department we are testing out multi-touch, high definition 55” Mondopads that will be placed in the new team locker rooms. Coaches will be able to review video footage of games and events with this state of the art digital display.

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