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ITS Fall Update 2012

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September 10, 2012

Dear Trinity Community,

Information Technology Services (ITS) Update

As the campus is bustling with the start of the academic year activities, we have a number of updates that we would like to share. We had many planned projects, but also a couple of unplanned events such as our server room outage.

Organizational Changes

We welcomed Jesse Vazquez to our team as a Distributed Computing Specialist. Jesse is a 2012 Trinity graduate and with his 4 years of experience working at the Help Desk he has hit the ground running.

Unplanned Outage

On the evening of Sunday, July 15th technology services (email, website, Moodle, Peoplesoft, etc.) to the campus were down for a 5 – 6 hour period. We had a server that began to smoke, which set off the fire alarm, causing the primary UPS to shut down, which meant a loss of power to the server room. Once the power was restored, it took several hours to get all of the servers up and running, but by 11:30pm everything was back on line. There was one casualty during this event, which was the TrinFlix video server. As luck would have it we were replacing it with an upgraded version of the software, so we transitioned this into a production environment earlier than anticipated. We had great response from Campus Safety and Facilities. I was extremely pleased with the teamwork and appreciate the patience of the campus while we worked to restore services.

“One Card” / Access Control

New ID cards have been issued to all Faculty, Staff and students as part of the initial phase in the replacement of our current Access Control System. If you have not picked up your new ID, please stop by the ITS Help Desk. This places us in a position to be able to begin upgrading of physical locks which could begin during the fall semester. We will be issuing new ID cards to Emeriti and other affiliate groups during the fall semester.

Presentation of the card to the lock should be with the picture facing you, hold it close to the lock and slowly move it until the light displays. Please make sure that you try your new card, as we have had a number of problems reported with failed proximity chips which is the credential currently used for door access. If you find that your card does not work, please come to the Help Desk and we will replace your card. There are still a couple of integration points that have yet to be completed, one of them is moving the ID photos into the PeopleSoft data base so that they appear on the class rosters. We apologize for the inconvenience and will be working on this shortly.

In conjunction with the issuance of the new ID cards we upgraded the Blackboard transaction system which supports meal plans, vending and the Bantam Bucks program. The cutover to the new transaction system was completed on July 20th. In addition we have been working with the office of Campus Life to extend the offerings of the Bantam Bucks program to other merchants in the Hartford area. Starting in September Trinity Restaurant, Shop Rite (Kane St), The Italian Gourmet (Hartford Ave) and A Little Something Bakery (Park Rd) will all accept Bantam Bucks. We are continuing to negotiate with several other merchants and will keep the website updated as new merchants are brought on-board.

Moodle & Word Press Upgrades

We completed the migration to Moodle 2.2.2 late May before the start of the summer sessions. This release offers enhancements to the overall user experience, a more flexible file management system, an improved wiki, and a more comprehensive and up-to-date set of plugins. There is also a mobile extension that allows access from your smartphones and tablets. The Word Press upgrade was completed on July 18th. This new release provides the most up-to-date plugins and widgets, enhanced web-publishing capabilities and significant security improvements which will help reduce spam and other inconveniences.

Learning Spaces & Lab Updates

In support of the learning space initiatives, we completed the re-configuration of the B02 lab space to include seminar style seating as well as work station clusters to better accommodate the pedagogical needs of the disciplines that will teach in this room. LSC 138/139 has become a large lecture style classroom with seating for 55 students. We have added 4 new work stations to the Social Science Center in Williams to create expanded study space for students. An electronic lock has been installed on the south entrance to the Williams/Downes building, to accommodate 24 hour access to the Social Science Center. This also required adding a combination of mechanical and electronic locks to several interior doors to limit the night time access in the building. In other access control news we added a new gate along Broad St., just beyond Ferris that allows for quicker campus access to those that live in that area. Any Trinity member that has a valid ID card can gain access to the campus through that gate.

We completed the software updates to the computers in all of the labs early August. Each summer we develop a new image for the computers in the labs and classrooms incorporating new software, latest releases, etc. This year the windows operating system remains Windows 7. A detailed list of software included in the image can be found at our website:

<http://www.trincoll.edu/LITC/its/computing/Pages/Lab.aspx>

ITEC

In conjunction with the Dean of Faculty Office and the Center for Teaching and Learning, ITEC sponsored several Faculty grants of up to \$1,000 each to enhance student learning with technology during the 2012-13 academic year. Our objective is to encourage the thoughtful use of technology to expand liberal arts learning beyond course timeslots and classroom walls. As one faculty member stated in the spring faculty workshop, this is about harnessing screen time for learning. We know the students are on-line, but we are figuring out how we use that to create a positive learning experience. Grants were awarded to: Lin Cheng, Luis Figueroa, Renny Fulco, Seth Markle, Theresa Morris, David Reuman & Mary Sandoval. ITEC has also encouraged faculty interested in Blended courses to take advantage of the course development grants offered through the Next Generation Learning Challenges (NGLC) Blended Learning in Liberal Arts project coordinated by Bryn Mawr College. The recipients of these grants are: Stephanie Chambers, Jack Dougherty, Renny Fulco, Dave Henderson and Eduardo Lage-Otero . In addition to the grants, Jack represented Trinity at the spring NGLC conference.

Web Help Desk Software

The transition to a new Help Desk ticketing solution took place on Monday, May 21st. We are excited about the deployment of this new tool which provides many feature enhancements for those manning the Help Desk operation, and it also provides a portal for each community member to submit and view the status of your tickets (lock, cable TV, phone, network and computer issues). Please use <http://itshelp.trincoll.edu> .

Starting Out

The Starting Out program web presence continues to expand with the on-line course selection process added this year. The new features of the first year web portal have allowed the college to reduce the number of Starting Out packets being mailed home from 4 to 2. Each year we look for improvements, making it both easier for our incoming class, as well as the management of the data on the back-end. One new aspect of this project is the development of a process to load parent data directly into PeopleSoft which will save the Development Office many hours of data entry effort. This system went through a successful run this August and many parents were imported into the system. Additional enhancements will be made to the process for next year and we anticipate loading all parents into PeopleSoft in the future.

Network & Systems

Care and feeding of our network infrastructure is essential to the health of our servers and personal computers. This summer we continue to upgrade the Ethernet switches deployed throughout the campus. We have also moved the connection point between our campus and our second ISP to ensure

that we remain online in the event of damage to our primary switch room or the conduit that leaves campus under Vernon Street.

We applied the latest patch release to Exchange 2010 on Tuesday, June 26th during our regular maintenance window, which runs from 5:30am – 7:00am. This particular release was just part of the routine maintenance.

Enterprise Applications

Preparations for the PeopleSoft 9.1 upgrade are well underway. The upgrade to Version 9.1 is scheduled for September 29th and 30th and centers on the “split” of Campus Solution (student/ alumni) data from the Human Capital Management (employee) data. End-User testing began mid-July with a deadline for User Signoff is the week of September 17, 2012.

Working with the Development Office we are scheduled to roll-out a new alumni community application, iModules, early September. This system replaces the Harris solution and provides a more flexible user interface and an enhanced gift processing capabilities which will better accommodate matching and recurring gifts.

Partnering with the Office of Human Resources and the Dean of Faculty Office, an online applicant tracking system will be introduced to the campus early Fall. The solution selected is PeopleAdmin, a vendor that focuses on the higher education market. This tool will allow applicants to apply on-line and eliminates the need to use the Sharepoint site to store applicant materials. Hiring managers will have immediate access to applications and will have tools to manage the applicant pool.

As a second phase of the implementation of the PyraMED Health Management System, Health Services introduced the Student Health Portal. During June Days the portal was released and provides incoming first year students with the ability to fill out and submit health history forms online. Students will also be able to print their immunization record directly from the system.

We also worked with the Emergency response team to implement a new Emergency Communication System, Rave. Data is uploaded on a daily basis from PeopleSoft to Rave; so changes you make to your urgent communication methods in PeopleSoft Self-Service will be reflected in Rave within 24 hours. We are also working with the team on the implementation of the Alertus system, which provides the technology to send a message to workstations during an emergency situation. This is different than the Rave Communication system in that it is not tied to the individual, but to the device. For example, Library patrons on public computers will receive notification on screen in the event of an emergency.

Administrative Initiatives

Late spring we installed a Bloomberg Terminal in the Career Development Center. The Bloomberg Terminal is a computer system that enables financial professionals to access the “Bloomberg Service”

which users can monitor and analyze real-time financial market data movements and place trades on the electronic trading platform. The system also provides news, prices quote and messaging across its proprietary network.

We also worked with the center in developing a PeopleSoft feed of student data in the eRecruiting system eliminating the need to enter data manually. In addition, we assisted the center with the purchase and configuration of an event check in system.

We are currently working with the office of Graduate Studies to place their Admissions Application online. We anticipate having this completed early fall. We also worked with the Library and the Communications office to port the Library Website over to Sharepoint.

Data Security Initiatives

An ITS internal security committee has begun focusing their energies on establishing best practices for securing mobile devices, and has recommended that all mobile devices be password protected. The password (PIN's) protection of Mobile Devices will be enforced for all faculty and staff cell phones and tablets that synchronize e-mail and calendars with the college's Exchange server through ActiveSync. The effective dates are September 18th for Staff and September 25th for Faculty members. No need to wait until the policy is in place, protect your phone and data and put a password on today.

In addition, we have developed a method to have devices "wiped clean" in the case of loss or theft to further protect the college from having confidential or sensitive information get into the hands of someone not affiliated with the institution. You can find these instructions on our web-site at: <http://www.trincoll.edu/LITC/its/security/Pages/LostStolenDevices.aspx>

We have also begun the process of encrypting laptops to protect against unauthorized access to the contents of the hard drive potentially including confidential and sensitive information. All laptops that are updated or installed this summer were encrypted as part of our standard procedures, and a schedule is being developed to address existing laptops.

Wrap-Up

It has been a very busy summer for the ITS organization. If you have any questions about any of these initiatives or organizational changes I can be reached at ext.2525 or email, Suzanne.Aber@trincoll.edu.

Sue Aber

Director of Information Technology Services