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ITS Spring Update 2012

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Dear Trinity Community,

Information Technology Services (ITS) Update

As the spring semester is getting underway, we want to take a moment to share information on departmental changes and the results of a busy fall.

Organizational Changes

We are excited to introduce to the campus our new Instructional Technologist, Sue Denning, who joined the Trinity Team on Monday January 9th. Sue spent several years at Simmons College as an Instructional Technologist, but most recently as a Senior Project Manager advocating for digital and web tools in corporate and educational settings. Sue will be supporting a blend of offices in the Sciences, Humanities & Social Sciences, to see a complete list, please go to our website:

<http://www.trincoll.edu/Library/its/instructional/Pages/Technologists.aspx> Special thanks to ITEC and our search committee that brought Sue to the campus; Janet Morrison, David Branning, Madalene Spezialetti, Amy Harrell and Jean-Pierre Haerberly.

Jeff Hammond said his good-byes to the community late December. While Jeff will be missed by his colleagues and campus constituents, rest assured that we are prepared to support the mac needs in his absence, so please contact our helpdesk for support. We wish Jeff the best.

Luca Pizzoferrato will say his goodbyes to the campus at the end of January. Luca has served the campus well as our Network Administrator and we wish him luck with his new opportunities.

Access Control is being integrated into the ITS Team with Peter Sobering guiding the operations team which is comprised of Curtis Gamble, John McDowell and recently welcomed back Andy Zucks. Working under the guidance of Ann Marie Krupski is Lurdes Fernandes managing the database and card services aspects of the operations. The Access Control operation is located on the B-level of the Library and Information Technology Center.

As part of the integration into our operations we are looking at opportunities to improve the process. Beyond the evaluation of new software solutions, we are evaluating the entire approach to managing door access and look to move in the direction of a one card solution.

Our analysis of calls and requests for late night support at the Help Desk shows that there is very limited activity at this time. Coupled with the fact that facilities requests will no longer be handled by ITS, we have set new hours at the desk this semester (close at 9:30pm instead of 11:30pm). During Final Exams we will have extended hours: <http://www.trincoll.edu/Library/its/help/Pages/Hours.aspx>

ITEC

Working with the committee on Information Technology we hosted a common hour sessions on tablet computing. Speakers for the event were Ron Kiener, Scott Smedley and Eduardo Lage-Otero. See the newly launched ITEC Website for details on the pilot project and presentations.

<http://www.trincoll.edu/Library/its/ITEC/Pages/default.aspx>

WITT

The Winter Institute of Teaching with Technology was held on January 18th and was very well attended. We had 5 very interesting presentations. We are inundated with an abundant number of technological solutions, and Jack Dougherty spoke about choosing the right tools for your Class: Moodle vs. Google Docs vs. Wordpress. Hebe Guardiola-Diaz's topic was Mastering content with student created videos. Ron Kiener spoke about his experience with using the iPad in the classroom. Rachael Barlow: A new approach to giving feedback on student papers and Madalene Spezialetti: Developing Critical and Creative Problem Solving Skills through Video. All presentations were engaging and I suspect everyone took away new ideas.

Art Collection System

Early this fall, working with Art History & Studio Arts faculty we purchased and implemented a Gallery Systems product called EmbARK, a system designed to catalogue and manage the College's Art Collection. The system is used to track all aspects of an art object's history and use. It is used to document acquisitions, conservation, exhibits and valuations. The initial phase of the project was to convert records that were housed in a FileMaker database, the next phase is to implement the web kiosk, which will provide the ability to display collections on the College's web site.

Budget Enhancing Projects

As part of our business practices we continuously review the systems we support to determine whether the solution continues to be the right product for today's environment and whether they remain fiscally prudent. The printing of our AP and payroll checks recently came under scrutiny and we have chosen to transition to PeopleSoft's delivered check printing process. This will eliminate the use of a 3rd party product called Pay-base and results in an annual savings of \$15,000 and a cost avoidance of a \$26,000 software upgrade.

Along this same line, in February, we will see the end-of-life of our Blackberry Enterprise Server (BES). This is an example of a layer of technology that was once necessary, but with so many smart-phone options available today, it has become obsolete. While this results in a small annual savings of \$2,500, it eliminates a potential point of failure and frees up support and maintenance time of our system administrators.

System Upgrades

The transition to SharePoint 2010 was completed mid-semester. SharePoint is used by many departments as a collaborative file sharing tool, as well as the colleges intranet. With this latest release the tool offers an enhanced interface for “Mac” users. If you are looking for an effective way to manage your documents create your own sharepoint site. It’s easy for any campus constituent to set up a personal SharePoint site, just go <http://personal.trincoll.edu>. If a site doesn’t already exist, the system will provision a new site.

At the close of the calendar year we completed the year-end payroll tax updates. But coming later this year will be a major PeopleSoft upgrade to version 9.1. This upgrade does not change the end-user interface, but has a lot of behind the scenes impact with separation of Student and HR information into two separate databases. As we evaluate the scope of this project we will keep you posted as to the timing of the upgrade, but best guess at this point will be fall 2012.

On-going maintenance of our systems is essential for the health of our IT infrastructure. This is just a reminder that we have established a maintenance window from 5:00am to 7:00am every Tuesday morning for this purpose. There will be weeks where we won’t schedule any upgrades, but notifications of system maintenance will continue to be posted through Trinity Today. Large maintenance windows for upgrades to systems like PeopleSoft will continue to be scheduled in coordination with other campus offices as necessary.

Enterprise Applications

An on-going goal for the Enterprise Applications group is to build stronger partnerships with the Administrative Offices. As an initial step in that direction, monthly meetings with the Development Office and Alumni relations has been established. These meeting have resulted in a number of reporting enhancements that have provided for operational efficiencies. While the team is just getting started, we are optimistic about the gains to be achieved from this collaborative approach. One new project on the horizon for this team is the transition from Harris to iModules Alumni Community which has an improved alumni interface and a more sophisticated giving model.

On the Admissions front, an online checklist for admissions applicants made its debut this fall. The checklist provides the applicant with a quick and easy way to see what documents have been received by the Admissions Office. This was a big hit and a time-saver for the Admissions staff who typically answer an endless number of queries concerning receipt of grades, references, etc. Next on the list is providing on-line Admissions Decisions. Starting with the ED2 decisions, answers to whether a student has been accepted will be available on-line. While this makes it easier for the applicant, it also reduces the labor and cost associated with decision letters, as only accepted students will receive a letter via mail.

The Horizons Study Abroad Solution was launched Mid-November, a project we worked on with the Office of International Programs. A hosted solution for study away applications, Horizons will allow the Office of International Programs to move from paper forms and communications to an online

application management and reporting system. The new online system will allow Trinity and Non-Trinity students to apply for study abroad and view the status of their applications electronically. Additionally, the system will automatically notify students via email as their application is processed by the International Programs staff, as well as provide an improved set of reporting tools.

Composting with Environmental Sciences

Associate Professor Scott Smedleys' research on composting led to a joint development effort of a web application to facilitate public participation in helping to identify the types of birds and animals that visit composting sites. Photos are taken automatically by motion-triggered cameras at the 3 types of composting sites. The "citizen scientist" views the image online to identify the type of animal that is visiting the site with 5 independent views needed to confirm a sighting. The web application was built by the Software Developers in Academic Computing and our Instructional Technologists worked with Scott in introducing it to the community. Here is a quick clip on the project with the Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy. <http://www.wfsb.com/video?clipId=6349543&autostart=true>

Data Security Initiatives

An ITS internal security committee has been established under the leadership of Angie Wolf this semester. The team will begin to identify the priority of issues to address.

Wrap-Up

If you haven't tried the new mobile website on your smart phone, bookmark the site, it's a quick and easy way to find out what's happening on campus or look-up directory information and more: <http://m.trincoll.edu/>

It has been a busy and productive fall semester. 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