

ITS Staff Profile

“We must anticipate changes in technology and build an IT infrastructure that can adapt and grow.”

Ronald Thomas has a long history in the telecommunications industry. He started his own business at the age of 26, with the goal of providing the public with telecommunication solutions that would meet their needs. In 2001, Ron took advantage of an opportunity to join UAlbany as a Telecommunications Administrator for the Helpdesk. In 2005, he was promoted to Project Manager for the department. He now manages the requests for voice and data services that come into Telecomm from various campus construction and rehabilitation projects.

Ron has several major projects under his belt but even more on his plate. He and his team are currently managing more than 50 projects across the University's three campuses. In the recent past, new construction has accounted for a significant number of the projects under Ron's watchful eye. One such project is the University's New Entry Building, which will be the first deployment of Voice Over IP at UAlbany. This cutting-edge technology will converge the two networks that support voice and data. During the construction of the Gen *NY* Sis Cancer Research Center on the University's East Campus, Ron worked closely with contractors

and the School of Public Health to ensure that the facility would be well-equipped with progressive telecommunications technology. In addition to new construction, Ron is also involved with projects that support other departments at the University. Several months before 300 players, coaches and trainers were due to arrive on campus, Ron and other members of the UAlbany community were preparing for the 2005 Giants Training Camp. Ron's team was responsible for reprogramming telephone service and data access in the facilities being used by the camp. The team also relocated voice and data access for Athletics staff who were displaced when the Giants operation moved into their offices in the Physical Education and RACC facilities - a transition described as “seamless” this year.

Ron has managed the renovation of several residence halls and classrooms. In addition, he monitored the progress of the wiring infrastructure and the set up of the departmental accounts in the NanoFab North and South facilities. As the Project Manager for the Life Sciences Research Building, Ron also managed the wiring for the facility, which has Voice Over IP

capabilities should the occupants wish to use it in the future. The facility features 30 wireless access points. Finally, he was also a contributor to the University's project to expand wireless access on the academic podium and in the Campus Center.

Ron earned his undergraduate degree in Sociology from the College of Saint Rose in 1993. He acknowledges that the success of his work comes from a team effort and extends his appreciation to: Director of Telecommunications Tom Neiss, Assistant Directors Odette Fung and Don Gallerie and Tom Hoey, who closely monitors and manages the technical aspects of the projects.

Ron is no stranger to teamwork, on or off the job. He and his wife Tricia have five children: Alaina, 14; Sierra, 9; Ronnie, 6; Talia, 3; and Olivia Kay, 11 months. Spending time with his family is Ron's top priority, as well as his favorite pastime.



Ron Thomas

How can we help you?

The start of the fall semester is an excellent time to inform and remind the UAlbany community of the role of Information Technology Services (ITS). Technology is a vital part of campus life, and it's important to know what is available and where to go for help.

ITS is a service-oriented organization, providing many of the programs and services supporting the technology needs of our diverse campus community. In addition to a staff of approximately 130 employees, we also work with a variety of campus partners, including technology coordinators in various academic, administrative and research units and the libraries. We employ over 125 students, who are dispersed throughout our organization and

are an integral part of our support services.

ITS is composed of seven groups, all reporting to the University's Chief Information Officer, Christine E. Haile. Each group offers a variety of support services, designed to accommodate the teaching, research and service efforts of our students, faculty and staff.

- Client Support Services
- Extended Learning
- Information Security
- Research IT
- Systems Management and Operations
- Telecommunications
- University Applications Development

ITS is here to help, and help is available in many forms. We have three help desks, all available to answer questions and assist with

your technology needs.

The Student Helpdesk, also known as “The SHeD,” can be reached at 442-3700, Option 1, or theshed@albany.edu;

The Faculty/Staff Helpdesk can be reached at 442-3700, Option 2, or ihelp@albany.edu;

The Telecommunications Helpdesk can be reached at 437-3800 or telecom@uamail.albany.edu.

Detailed information about our groups and services is available on our recently redesigned website at <http://www.albany.edu/its>.

If you have any questions or comments about our services, please contact the Office of the CIO at cio@albany.edu.

Announcements

Welcome to...

Jack Menzies, UAlbany's first Information Security Officer. The ISO is responsible for the development and delivery of a comprehensive information security and privacy program for the University.

ITS would also like to welcome the following new staff members:

Client Support Services

Huma Ahmad, Helpdesk Analyst
 Kim McDonnell, Accounts and Access
 Matt Olsen, Lead Technical Coordinator, ResNet and The SHeD
 Susan Pero, Secretary

Systems Management & Operations

Eric Dombroski, System Administrator, Windows Group

Telecommunications

Megan Li, Administrative Assistant
 Erin Mosall, Switchboard Operator

University Applications Development

Caroline Manssino-Cohen, Computer Applications Training Specialist

Did You Know

UAlbany Will Soon Have Faster Connections to the Internet and Internet2

The ITS Office of Telecommunications has contracted to extend UAlbany's fiber infrastructure to the East Campus. If you imagine the current connection between the campuses as a two-lane highway, the new one would be equivalent to the Autobahn. As a result, bandwidth to the East Campus will increase tenfold. UAlbany's Main and Downtown campus connections to the Internet and Internet2 will see a 30% increase in bandwidth. All upgrades are expected to be complete by the end of October.

Congratulations to:

Joy Ewing, Extended Learning, for receiving the 2005 Judy L. Genshaft IFW Award. Joy used the award to cover costs associated with completing her Master of Science degree in Educational Administration & Policy Studies at the University at Albany in May, 2005.

Bob Yoder, Systems Management and Operations, for his upcoming publication in z/Journal. Bob's article, "Migrating a

mainframe SNA network to Communications Server running on AIX" is tentatively scheduled to appear in the October/November issue.

ITS regrets

to inform the University community that John Hart passed away this spring. John was a Switchboard Operator in Telecommunications for 10 years.

ITS News

ITS News is published by the Office of the CIO to provide the UAlbany community with news about information technology services available on campus, the different ways technology is being used at the University, and illustrate how ITS can assist with your technology needs.

We would like to thank the following for their contribution to this issue:

Elaine Amabile, Pete Connolly, Julie-Anne Crisafulli, Don Gallerie, Jane Kadish, Bob Lounello, Brian Macherone, Marybeth Salmon, Anne Shelton, Eric Warnke, Felix Wu.



Information Technology Services
 1400 Washington Avenue
 Albany, NY 12222-0000

Address Service Requested

How ITS Spent Summer Vacation...

While students were taking a break from their studies, ITS was hard at work completing several projects to improve technology services for the UAlbany community. This issue of ITS News will highlight several milestones that were achieved since May 1st.

Implementation for New Student Financials on PeopleSoft

The final module of PeopleSoft Student Administration was implemented this spring when "Student Financials" went live. Students can now view their invoices through MyUAlbany and in the future will have the ability to pay invoices online.

New Feature for Faculty on MyUAlbany

Faculty can log into MyUAlbany and select "View Permission Numbers" for each of their assigned classes. They can verify whether or not a permission number has been used, the name and Albany ID # of the student who used it, and the date it was used.

Upgraded to Exchange 2003

Outlook Web Access has a whole new look, thanks to an upgrade to Exchange 2003 Mail and Calendaring service. ITS' Systems Management & Operations and Client Support Services groups successfully migrated 2200 mailboxes to the new, upgraded system. All pre-existing email messages and calendar

UAlbany Joins the New York State Computational Grid

June 24th was a very important day for the University's research community: UAlbany became a member of the New York State Computational Grid (NYSGrid). The University joined a growing list of research institutions including sister SUNY schools Buffalo and Binghamton, Columbia, NYU and Rochester Institute of Technology. In addition, UAlbany also linked with national grids by becoming a member of the Open Science Grid (OSG). The OSG is a U.S. grid computing infrastructure that supports scientific computing via an open collaboration of science researchers, software developers, and computing, storage and network providers. According to Brian Macherone, director of ITS' Research IT group, membership in these research communities provides UAlbany with access to a host of new computational resources.

The NYSGrid was formed by the University at Buffalo's Center for Computational Research (CCR), and consists of many supercomputers and computer clusters located across the state. The purpose of establishing the grid was to provide shared computational resources among colleges and universities. Faculty at other schools can access UAlbany's equipment, and our research faculty can access the wealth of resources housed elsewhere among the other participating institutions.

While Buffalo's CCR has led the way in developing the NYSGrid, they realize



From left: Anne Shelton (RIT), Jonathan Bednasz (UB), Eric Warnke (RIT) and Mark Green (UB) at the SUNY at Buffalo's Center for Computational Research.

significant benefits from the cooperation of other schools. Additional researchers and computing resources serve to broaden the disciplines that the NYSGrid is able to serve.

ITS' Research IT group will be working closely with Buffalo and other institutions to maximize the benefits of this new partnership. Brian Macherone and his staff are already interviewing researchers to assist in the initial development of their first NYSGrid application. UAlbany faculty are actively involved in the utilization of High Performance Computing (HPC) systems with the support of the Research IT group:

Professor Chittibabu Guda, Bioinformatics:

The bioinformatics research focuses on developing computational algorithms, databases and web servers for DNA and protein data analysis. This application is the first to be grid-enabled on the NYS Grid with assistance from members of UB's CCR team.

Professor Scott Tenenbaum, Functional Genomics and Systems Biology:

The genomics research group at the Ge*NY*Sis

How ITS Spent Summer Vacation... (Cont'd from page 1)

appointments made a smooth transition as well. New enhancements include increased speed and security, but the most notable feature is its user-friendly web interface.

Updated Global Address List

Outlook's Global Address List (GAL) was recently updated, making information consistent with the University Human Resources records system. Faculty and staff users may notice name changes due to the addition of their middle initial. For GAL Helpful Hints, please visit: http://www.albany.edu/its/app_instructions_outlook_global_address_list_gal.htm.

New DARS Web System

When the University's mainframe was taken offline this summer, many applications needed new homes. The new Degree Audit Reporting System, DARS Web, allows academic advisors to quickly and easily obtain student degree audits via the web.

More Smart Technology Classrooms on Campus

Two new smart classrooms, equipped with a projector, document camera, DVD/VCR, touch panel control and Dell PC, were installed in the Earth Science building. Additionally, Lecture Center 7 had a facelift – students can enjoy its new ceiling, seats and carpeting this fall.

New Communication Policies

Two policies were approved by the ITS Policy Review Board and are awaiting final approval from the President. Learn more about Email as an Official Means of Communication for Students and Broadcast Voicemail Messages at <http://www.albany.edu/its>.



Christine E. Haile

From the Desk of the CIO...

One of my primary goals is to consistently maintain open lines of communication with the UAlbany community. The

best way for ITS to develop policies, processes and plan for the future is by employing strategies that are open, iterative, and inclusive of the University's collective expertise. We're all stakeholders in the changing needs of our institution, and it's important to position ITS to respond to how quickly technology can change. The Office of the CIO has created two advisory boards to assist ITS in developing strategies for success that accommodate the technological facets of this dynamic institution.

The Policy Review Board (PRB) was established to help create a sound policy infrastructure for IT issues. All ITS policies exist within and are guided by University policy, extending to the SUNY system, state and federal requirements. Within this framework, the PRB helps ensure that policies are consistent with current technologies, as well as the evolving needs of the University.

The PRB receives draft policy statements for review and revision, and makes recommendations to the CIO. The Board is representative of the campus community, including faculty, staff and students. An undergraduate student representative is still needed. Sophomore or junior standing is preferred. All majors are welcome; no technical expertise is needed. If you know someone who is interested, please direct them to cio@albany.edu.

The ITS Liaisons Group was developed to open lines of communication between ITS and major campus organizational units. School and college deans, and division vice presidents, were asked to name a designee to serve as a

liaison for their division or school. The ITS Liaisons interact with the Office of the CIO and ITS unit directors on a regular basis to plan and assess IT services across the campus. They receive regular updates on projects and initiatives, and serve as our primary contacts for special notifications or requests for input. In turn, they have a clearer path to communicate their needs and priorities to ITS. It has been extremely helpful—and gratifying—to develop these relationships across divisions, colleges and departments.

One of our primary lines of communication to the University community is through the ITS website. Our site has been redesigned in an effort to provide our customers with more information about our services. I think you'll find that the site is more integrated than it was before, with a common look and style throughout. We've also incorporated more self-service features which we hope enable users to find what they need more quickly. We are in the process of simplifying many of our forms, so you should expect to see more online changes in the coming months.

Your opinion matters! To learn more about our stakeholder groups, the services we provide, or evaluate our new website, visit us at <http://www.albany.edu/its>. We're always interested in your questions and concerns. Or, if you prefer, you can email us at cio@albany.edu. Please take the time to let us know how we're doing. We look forward to hearing from you!

Christine E. Haile

Christine E. Haile
Chief Information Officer

Bidding Farewell to the University's IBM Mainframe: The End of an Era

When MyUAlbany debuted in 2003, it revolutionized the way UAlbany conducted its daily business. Use of the web has become so pervasive it's easy to forget that the Voice Response Registration (VRR) system predated web-based registration, and prior to VRR, students stood in long lines waiting to register for classes. While it's been easy to adapt to the convenience of the web, it wasn't long ago that the campus community utilized very different types of computing equipment and services.

Prior to the inclusive, web-based system we use today, the University relied on an IBM mainframe to host the majority of its administrative systems and applications used by faculty, staff and students. None of these systems were integrated. For example, there was no all-inclusive database that could be queried for a student's academic record, financial aid, or HR information. Such a level of integration was something few people dared to dream of just a decade ago.

The IBM mainframe, which was housed in CS-5, was the centerpiece of University computing for over twenty years. As technology progressed, it became clear that

UAlbany needed to upgrade to a more integrated processing environment. And as computers became more compact, yet more powerful, the much larger mainframe systems became more inefficient and costly to run. University administrators began planning the conversion to the Integrated Administrative System (IAS) in 1997, and the subsequent years were marked with numerous milestones as UAlbany converted its mainframe systems to equivalent web-based services. Each replacement brought ITS closer to the point of shutting down the mainframe permanently.

The final job of the University's IBM mainframe system was complete on June 23, 2005. A group of ITS staff and others from administrative offices who formerly relied on its nonintegrated services gathered at CS-5. "Taps" played quietly in the background while Chief Information Officer Christine Haile shut the system down for the last time. The equipment was moved out of CS-5 a few days later, truly marking the end of an era for campus computing.

As with the end of any era, the new world is typically not far behind. The ITS migration from a centralized processing environment to a



CIO Haile shuts down the IBM Mainframe.

distributed, web-based one was no exception. Phasing out the mainframe dramatically changes the number of machines the University relies on. The monolithic IBM computer represented a time when multiple organizational units were dependent on a single machine. ITS' Systems Management & Operations group now manages multiple servers which support the applications that have become an integral part of a web-based environment.

ITS bids a fond farewell to the IBM mainframe which supported the computing needs of the academic community for over twenty years, and thanks the many staff and partners who made our new, integrated system a reality.

UAlbany Joins the New York State Computational Grid

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Center for Excellence in Cancer Biology focuses on using genomic-scale technologies to study Systems Biology questions with an emphasis on post-transcriptional gene regulation by RNA-binding proteins.

Professor Yongqiang Xue and Professor James Reynolds, Computational Nanoscience: The Computational Nanoscience and Nanotechnology (CNN) Group focuses on atomic-scale theory and modeling of nanostructured materials, devices and their applications in information technology and biotechnology.

Professor Alexander Shekhtman, Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) Structural Biology: This group focuses on using NMR spectroscopy to study regulatory protein-protein interactions involved in the progression of signaling in the cells.

Professor Timothy Gage, Anthropology: This ongoing research on infant mortality is developing statistical models for fully implementing the approximate determinants model for infant mortality.

The benefits of membership in the NYSGrid are just the beginning of exciting new research capabilities at the University at Albany. For more information about the services offered by the Research IT group, please visit <http://www.albany.edu/its/researchit>. A technical overview of grid computing can be found at <http://www.ccr.buffalo.edu/grid/content/overview.htm>. Open Science Grid information can be found at <http://www.opensciencegrid.org>, where you can view UAlbany's status on their monitoring page.

UAlbany Gets New FACT Representative

The Office of the CIO recently appointed Joy Ewing, Extended Learning Coordinator in the Office of Extended Learning, as the University at Albany's new campus SUNY Faculty Access to Computing Technology (FACT) Committee representative.

The FACT Committee was created in the spring of 1989 to help give SUNY faculty the advantage of maximum access to computing through financial support and the sponsorship of various SUNY-wide programs. These programs include the Conference on Computing in the Disciplines (COCID), the Student Computing Access Program (SCAP), and the Conference on Instructional Technologies (CIT).

As the FACT representative, Joy will provide faculty at UAlbany with information on upcoming events and opportunities to apply for grants. If you have any questions regarding faculty access to computing technology at UAlbany, feel free to contact her at jewing@uamail.albany.edu or at (518) 442-5140.

Fall 2005 FACT COCID Events

Application of Mobile Technology Tools in the Online Learning Experience
 Monroe Community College
 October 3, 2005

Small Tools – Big Ideas:
 New Technologies for Teaching Art and Art History
 SUNY Fashion Institute of Technology
 October 7, 2005

Technology Enhanced Foreign Language Learning
 University at Buffalo
 September 30-October 1, 2005

The deadline for submitting COCID grant applications is February 1, 2006. For submission guidelines please visit <http://www.fact.suny.edu/cocids.html>.



Joy Ewing

Wi-UAlbany? We've got Wireless!

Among the most exciting projects ITS addressed over the summer was the expansion of Wi-UAlbany, the University's wireless service. Wireless access was previously available on a limited basis as a pilot in the University Libraries. Thanks to the efforts of the Office of Telecommunications, you can now use your laptop without a wall jack in most of the Campus Center, the outdoor Podium and Fountain areas, the hallways outside the Lecture Centers and the garden area between the Campus Center and the Science Library. Wi-UAlbany remains available in all of the University Libraries.

Wireless is well on the way to becoming a new standard, and Chief Information Officer Christine E. Haile thinks the University community will welcome expanded access. She expects Wi-UAlbany to be widely used in these new locations. "Ideally, we'd like people to be able to take their laptops across the campus without ever losing their Internet connection," Haile says. "Until campus-wide access becomes a reality, we need to make wise choices about where the service is. Our goal is to make Wi-UAlbany available to as much of the University community as possible. We think the availability of wireless in these locations will encourage more people to use the service." Signs have been installed on the podium and in the Campus Center to

denote access. They will also be used to identify new locations in future expansion efforts.

Wi-UAlbany is a secure service available to all students, faculty and staff at the University. A NetID and Unix password are required to authenticate users and enable access to an encrypted network. Users also need to install VPN Client, a software package that helps maintain security on a wireless connection (available at www.albany.edu/its). Students, faculty and staff can use Wi-UAlbany to access the Internet, MyUAlbany, WebCT, email (via Outlook Web Access), and all library resources. Access to personal or departmental folders will be made available in the next stage of development.

While Wi-UAlbany provides mobility that isn't possible with a desktop, it's important to understand the differences—and limitations—of wireless service. "Wireless connections are subject to more interference from other devices such as portable phones, microwave ovens and high current motors like those used in elevators," says Don Gallerie, Assistant Director of Data Communications. "While the wireless system has been designed to properly service the podium areas, it is possible that connectivity can be adversely affected by any of these devices. If your connection is weak in



one area, moving just a few feet can make a big difference. It's important to remember that before concluding that there's something wrong with the service or your laptop."

Users may find that wireless connections are not as fast as what many of us have come to expect with wired access, which delivers a stronger, faster connection. If you're viewing something with a lot of graphics or playing games, a wired connection is usually a better choice. "There's a trade-off involved," says Haile. "People want to be connected and portable devices are a great way to stay mobile. They aren't necessarily a substitute for the speed and security of our wired infrastructure."

Haile views the expansion of Wi-UAlbany as a conduit for increased connectivity across the campus. "One of the goals of ITS is to continue to build an IT infrastructure that supports anytime, anywhere access," she says. "Wi-UAlbany is one more way that we're turning that dream into a reality."

Wi-UAlbany accommodates Windows, Mac, and Linux operating systems. To get started, please visit: <http://www.albany.edu/its>.