



UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY

State University of New York

ITS News

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

IT Community & Dell Deliver

The Office of the CIO invited the IT community to join efforts in making a collective contribution to the Kermit L. Hall and Phyllis A. Hall Inaugural Scholarship fund. We are proud to report that gifts from numerous staff and IT vendors totaled over \$5,200. One of our vendors, Dell, generously contributed three brand new laptops.

It seemed fitting that these new laptops be given to three of the 15 students who received an Inaugural Scholarship Award. All recipients were invited to submit an application and essay for consideration of one of the new machines. The three laptops were awarded to Maria Jose Carranza, a senior Social Welfare major with a Psychology minor; Alice Forrestal, a junior Biology major and Math minor, and; Wingate Wellington, a junior Accounting major.

The Office of the CIO would like to take this opportunity to thank all our IT partners for their generous contributions to the Inaugural Scholarship Fund. Special thanks to Dell for their donation, which significantly benefited the three laptop recipients. We would also like to thank Deborah Read, Dan Doyle and Valerie DiRocco-Ruskin in University Development for their assistance.



From the Desk of the CIO...

It's interesting how people react when they find out I'm a CIO. The position is relatively new in many organizations and is sometimes

misunderstood. I think of that every time someone says, "Boy, I'm glad I don't have your job." I think it's exciting. So which is it--is this glass half-full or half-empty?

What makes people say that? I have three basic theories about that response: 1) People assume I'm immersed in technical details, which terrifies them. 2) Others speculate that responding to users' expectations is impossible, especially due to limited resources. 3) The "no glory" principle: no one notices when everything is working well, but when a service hiccups, they're gonna call the CIO!

My job is mainly about leadership and management. The most important aspect is developing an excellent IT workforce. It's important to stay abreast of major technological changes, but I rely on technical staff for detailed expertise. It's a team effort, but you don't want to ask me to fix your PC!

Technology has become pervasive across teaching, research and administration, so I need to build relationships with all University constituencies. The user community's high expectations are part of the excitement. IT services are involved in

every aspect of the campus's operations. We know you depend on our services and it's incredibly fulfilling to deliver those that are mission-critical.

As for glory, our infrastructure is more complex than ever before, and we take pride in its reliability. Services should just work. IT systems need regular inspection and maintenance just like your car. If a breakdown occurs, you can be sure we're on the case. I think our community, while wanting uninterrupted services, is very understanding and patient.

So what keeps me coming back each day? Our customers, especially students. Working at a university is about changing people's lives, and no matter what your role, you are part of that process. Maintaining the IT operations required for the University's daily business is hardly routine. There are always new services to consider, problems to be solved, and opinions to be shared.

Yes, there are many challenges to being CIO but it is incredibly rewarding as well. You get to work with smart people on important projects that directly impact teaching, research, service, athletics and the community. What could be better than that?

Of course, this doesn't solve the problem with my mother. I still can't quite explain to her what I do for a living.

Cheers,
Christine E. Haile

Office of the CIO Establishes New Stakeholder Groups

What's the most effective way for a service organization to assess how well it meets customers' needs? If you said "ask them," we agree this is a good strategy. Last semester, the Office of the CIO established on-going forums with two important constituencies: faculty and students. Both groups appreciate the opportunity to express their opinions, and the CIO has a better understanding of the IT services most valued by these stakeholders. It also appears they share similar concerns about technology, albeit from different perspectives.

Many ingredients go into IT resource allocation and decision-making, so it's important to know what users want and expect from campus IT services. There is no substitute for direct communication, according to CIO Christine Haile. "We need to have the perspective of a range of faculty on what they're looking for to support their teaching and student learning," she says. "The same is true for students. The technology needs to accommodate the needs of a wide range of majors."

The Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) advises the CIO on faculty support services, instructional technology and assists in identifying opportunities for new or expanded

IT services. Last fall, the group focused on the need to expand classroom technology and what features faculty find most useful. They also addressed the upcoming WebCT upgrade and efforts to identify, pilot and rollout new instructional technology tools. Discussions continue this spring, along with opportunities to preview the next iteration of MyUAlbany (scheduled to rollout in 2008), test the new version of WebCT and explore instructional technology tools like blogs and wikis.

Faculty from the College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Education, Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy, College of Computing and Information and the School of Business are current participants. The CIO hopes to build the group so it continues to reflect the diversity of academic disciplines at the University, as well as individual levels of technology use among faculty. Faculty interested in joining should contact Joy Ewing at jewing@uamail.albany.edu.

The Student Advisory Board (SAB) is composed of twenty students who were selected with assistance from the Student Association, Student Advocates, the editor of the ASP, Student Success and Institutional Research. Undergraduates and graduates

across 17 academic departments are represented. The Board works with the CIO to assess current services and help identify opportunities for new services.

Thus far, the Board has conducted an initial, informal review of IT services; some of their suggestions have already been implemented. Members have responded positively to the process. "The most pleasing aspect of the Board is how active the CIO has been in responding to student issues," says Sean Rintel, a Ph.D. candidate in Communication. "This is more than sheer transparency of university operation; it is the ability for students to make a difference."

The SAB strives to broadly represent the UAlbany student body and is very interested in hearing from other students about their experience with campus IT services. Town hall meetings and other communication mechanisms will be established to create opportunities for all students to share their opinions with the Board. Questions and comments can be directed to the Student Advisory Board at <http://www.albany.edu/its/2989.htm>.

Web Management Made Easy

As the University's website grows in size and importance, so does the challenge of managing it to best support UAlbany's mission and goals. The University has a new tool for addressing that challenge -- a web content management system (CMS), and ITS and Media and Marketing are working to gradually introduce the system and develop a strategy for its effective implementation across the campus.

As the name suggests, content management systems offer tools and resources aimed at improving the organization and presentation of content on websites. RedDot CMS is the system purchased by the University.

"For UAlbany, this system has considerable potential. It will enable our many campus authors and editors of web content to more easily update their sites, keeping information timely and of high value to site visitors. But even more important, it's a tool to help us better project the quality of UAlbany because it facilitates the creation of well-designed sites that effectively carry our messages and are accessible and user friendly," said Associate Vice President for Media and Marketing Catherine Herman. "The system will help drive consistent information throughout the site." The University will be working with Stamats, an experienced higher-education marketing

company, to develop a comprehensive marketing and branding plan, and, Herman notes, "how we present UAlbany on our website will be a critical part of the plan. RedDot CMS will help in the implementation of the plan the University adopts."

Working with ITS, Media and Marketing has been testing the potential of RedDot CMS through hands-on development of the Today at UAlbany news website. In addition to the ease with which non-technical staff can now directly update the site, Media and Marketing staff have gained valuable experience in how RedDot CMS works and how it can support



Photo by Jeffrey Guntert

Staff Profile – Katarina Holbrook

Katarina Holbrook

Software specialist, public health professional and interior designer are just a few of the hats Katarina Holbrook has worn at the University at Albany since joining the staff in 1996. This self-taught artist traded in her seventeen year-long career in pharmaceuticals to bring her passion for public health and technology to the campus and ITS.

During her tenure as a Public Health Educator and Project Coordinator for the School of Public Health's Continuing Education Department, Katarina developed several programs designed to educate New York State on important public health issues. The "Basic Environmental Health Course (BEHC)," offered training to county health officials across the state and also trained 32 faculty members on adult learning theory to support teaching and learning through the use of videoconferencing.

When Katarina joined ITS in 1998, she united her interest in environmental health with her passion for technology, fostering a collaborative relationship between the two fields. As Project Director for the Office of Extended Learning, she developed the "Pharmaceutical Drug Discovery Consortium" which included Albany Molecular, Albany College of Pharmacy, Omnicare Clinical Research and the University's School of Public Health. She also helped establish the East Campus Communication Center to promote educational programs that embrace the use of state-of-the-art technologies and teaching expertise to reach non-traditional students across the state. These efforts have been highlighted by [The Business Review](#), the [Capital District Business Review](#) and the [New York Times](#).

In her current role as Manager for Software Management and Compliance, Katarina processes over one thousand requests each year from the University community. In addition to her work as manager, she has

also coordinated two major space renovations for Client Support Services and represents the Office of the CIO on the University's Pandemic Planning Bird Flu Committee.

Her enthusiasm for art ranks right alongside public health and technology. Painting since her early twenties, her work was recently showcased at the Athens Cultural Center and can also be found in the possession of her colleagues and friends throughout the University, as she generously shares her talent with others.

Katarina earned her Associate's degree in Applied Science from Columbia Greene Community College, where she spent a year studying dendrology, the study of trees. She completed her Bachelor's degree with a double major in Chemistry and Biology from Excelsior College (formerly Regents College) and her Master's degree in Public Health from UAlbany. She is now working on a Ph.D. in Environmental Health and Toxicology.

UAlbany Upgrades Enterprise Service: WebCT Gets New Look & New Name

First introduced as a service to UAlbany by the Center for Excellence in Teaching Learning (CETL) in 1999, WebCT use has grown by leaps and bounds. What started as a pilot program has developed into an enterprise-wide service used by every school and college at the University. It has grown from approximately 2,000 users and nearly 50 courses in its first semester of use to over 500 courses and 21,000 users this past fall.

Just as support for WebCT moved from CETL to ITS last July, its parent company, WebCT, Inc., is also under new management. In February 2006 Blackboard, Inc., a leading provider of e-Education enterprise software applications and services, purchased WebCT, Inc. The changeover in management

coincides with a major campus upgrade of the course management system. The merger joined WebCT products and services under the Blackboard umbrella resulting in WebCT Campus Edition being re-branded as Blackboard Learning System CE Enterprise License - Release 6 (CE 6).

The upgrade will provide faculty with several enhancements and new features from the current version WebCT 4.1 including a student view built into each course and a new Group Manager tool that allows instructors to break up a class into smaller groups for such activities as group chats and assignments. In addition, faculty will no longer have to request a CE 6 course each semester as it will be created automatically.

Automatic course creation may encourage more widespread use of the tool by faculty, a desire expressed by members of the Office of the CIO Student Advisory Board. Students will also enjoy the new interface which can be customized by their instructors for individual courses. This upgrade sets the stage for future enhancements including a single sign-on that will allow access to Blackboard through MyUAlbany, direct access to ERes and the ability for faculty to upload final grades into PeopleSoft directly from their Blackboard course.

Roll out of the new version is scheduled to begin this summer with the first of two pilot programs. Fifteen fully online undergraduate courses will be offered during the 2007

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Summer Session, providing more than 350 students with a preview of the new platform. The Fall 2007 pilot will offer faculty using WebCT to supplement their classroom-based courses with an opportunity to get to know CE 6. A campus-wide rollout is scheduled for the Spring 2008.

Training on CE 6 will begin this summer for faculty participating in the fall pilot. In addition to face-to-face demos and training sessions, ITS will also offer online training sessions for those who are interested in self-paced instruction.

To keep track of the progress on the project faculty can visit the project website at: www.albany.edu/its/webct/upgrade. Here they can obtain more information on Blackboard Learning System CE Enterprise License, campus training and frequently asked upgrade questions. Faculty who are interested in participating in the Fall 2007 pilot should contact Joy Ewing at jewing@uamail.albany.edu or at (518) 442-4288.

Did You Know?

Forget your thumb drive!?! Not to worry - faculty, students and staff have 100 MB of secure space on our UNIX system to save files. The S Drive can be accessed in computer user rooms, ITS supported classrooms, your office, dorm or home. Visit our website and select UNIX from the "Browse/Request" drop down menu for more information.

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consistency in messages and graphic standards across UAlbany's website, says Mary Fiess, director of communications.

The Web Group has already built seventeen sites using RedDot CMS and turned management over to departments; another twenty are under development. Among the early adopters are the University Senate, Registrar's Office, and the Office of Undergraduate Education, where the content management system is used to update the online Undergraduate Bulletin quickly and easily.

Updating a site using RedDot is simple,

says Jayne VanDenburgh, who manages the University Senate website. "I have no programming experience and was worried about learning something new," she says, "but I found it similar to Word and transitioned to it easily. It is great being able to update the Senate website by myself."

The ITS Web Group is working closely with Media and Marketing to develop plans for a more extensive rollout to make this tool widely accessible to the University community. If you would like more information about RedDot CMS, please contact the Web Group for details and their estimated time frame for assistance. They can be reached at webmaster@albany.edu.

Announcements

Welcome to... Daniel Healy, Help Desk Analyst (Client Support Services), Jacqueline Bertrand, Telecommunications Analyst, and Judy Tarullo, Secretary I (Telecommunications)

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

Debbie Dickerson • Mary Fiess • Catherine Herman • Patricia McAuliff • Marybeth Salmon • Jayne VanDenburgh



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