January 18, 2013

Dear Trinity Community,

Information Technology Services (ITS) Update

As the campus is bustling with the start of the semester activities, we have a number of updates that we would like to share.

Academic Initiatives

Academic Computing in conjunction with the Library and the Center for Teaching and Learning hosted the Winter Institute on Teaching & Technology (WITT) on January 16th. In spite of the snow, the event was very well attended. A common thread running through many of the conversations was that students are more engaged.

The presentations were inspiring and highlighted the wide variety of ways technology has been incorporated into teaching and learning. Eric Galm started us off with his presentation on how he integrated podcasting and audio assignments as an alternative to traditional research reports into his classes. Eric noted that one of the side-benefits was a student getting an internship because of the skill they acquired in his class. Michal Ayalon spoke about using Quizlet and NanoGong to aid with students learning vocabulary words in a foreign language. These products provide a clever way to replace traditional flash cards.   Rachel Leventhal-Weiner spoke about using technology to teach writing and research efficiency, taking advantage of reference management tools like Refworks and note-taking tools like Evernote. In addition we had a panel presentation from David Cruze-Uribe and Terry Williams illustrating the value of video-conferencing using tools such as Skype, WebEx and Google+. Terry used Skype to collaborate with student research groups between 2 institutions and David found WebEx to be an effective way to present at a conference held in Prague that he was unable to attend in person. Audience participants also noted they are using Skype for interviewing candidates for faculty positions.

As part of WITT, several of the spring 2012 ITEC grant winners presented their projects. Following up on the video-conferencing conversation, Theresa Morris spoke about her experience with Skype in bringing three virtual guest speakers into her classroom. Seth Markle spoke on his experience with incorporating DJ software into *FYSM Intro to Hip-Hop Studies* and Lin Cheng on developing team problem-solving with group Wikis in *FYSM Engineering our Digital World*.

Jack Dougherty, ITEC Co-chair, announced a second round of grants with the objective of encouraging continued thoughtful use of technology to expand liberal arts learning beyond course timeslots and classroom walls. (More information is available at http://www.trincoll.edu/LITC/its/ITEC/Pages/News.aspx .) In addition, he invited members of the Trinity community to participate in the "Where's the Classroom" discussion group focused on digital courses and their implication for residential liberal arts colleges such as Trinity.
http://www.trincoll.edu/LITC/its/ITEC/Pages/Discussion-Group.aspx

To enrich the discussion, Jack suggests that one must experience learning in a digital course from the student's perspective by auditing/enrolling in an online lesson such as a MOOC (Massive Online Open Course). The discussion is open to all community members, and Faculty are eligible to receive a stipend. Proposals must be sent to ITEC by <u>February 1st</u>. The grant opportunities are funded by the Center for Teaching and Learning, Dean of Faculty, and Information Technology Services.

Recently, the Directors of Academic Computing and the CIO's from Connecticut College, Wesleyan University and Trinity have begun to meet to share best practices and opportunities for collaboration. Our initial meeting was a general discovery process and much discussion focused on Wesleyans venture into the world of MOOC's (Massive Online Open Courses). We are anxious to learn more about their initial experience.

Re-Organization

The ITS organization is always seeking opportunities to improve our support to the campus. After careful consideration we have decided that we can better meet the needs of the Trinity Community by adding a Director of Instructional Technology to our team. (This position is not a net add, but a re-allocation of an unfilled vacancy.) We expect to begin a search for this position in February. Jean-Pierre Haeberly who has been serving as Director of Academic Computing will continue to have responsibility for the Web Services group as Director of Web Applications and Services.

New Survey Software

Early in the semester we purchased a site license for Qualtrics, which is the survey tool that the Office of Institutional Research has been using for some time. Any departments interested in using it should contact Rachel Barlow, the software administrator.

Graduate Studies

In support of the grants offered by the Graduate Studies program to develop graduate-level courses the Instructional Technologists presented to the Graduate Studies Council a proposal on how they can help the grant recipients achieve their blended learning initiative goals. The presentation focused on modeling how a blended course might look using Stephanie Chambers' summer course on Women and Politics as an example. Using the course blueprint methodology potential opportunities were identified for moving traditional face-to face class time to on-line discussions. Leveraging Moodle, they outlined tools that we already have in-house for video-conferencing, blogging and videos that may help achieve their goals. The presentation concluded with proposed spring and summer workshops to jump-start the process.

In further support of the Graduate Studies program we developed an on-line student application process that went live at the end of November.

Learning Spaces & Lab Updates

We continually seek opportunities to improve the support of our labs. During the spring semester we will begin a pilot project that extends the virtualization technology into the B02 and B03 labs. Virtualization allows us to install and maintain applications used in the labs on a server and provide access to those applications in the labs without physically installing the software on each individual lab computer. The ultimate goal is to provide both Mac and PC platforms to the labs without requiring the devices to be dual booted. This will give us greater flexibility in providing updates to the lab software and will reduce boot-up time and the amount of time required each summer for refreshing the lab software. The spring pilot will be focused on learning the technology with the hopes of inviting faculty members to participate in the initial evaluation of the virtualization environment. During the pilot projects we anticipate that the boot-up of the labs machines will remain the same, but users may notice new icons on the desktop.

As part of our continued efforts to review non-discretionary costs we will conduct an examination of our software licenses seeking opportunities to work with ITEC to evaluate whether there are open source solutions that will meet campus needs and/or whether there are licenses that are no longer required.

We have been participating in the preliminary renovation discussions to enhance the Life Science Auditorium. Faculty from the sciences and psychology have led the discussion on proposed seating configuration to include work surfaces, similar to the seating installed in Clement 105.

The learning space committee has approved the funding for refinishing several blackboards over the winter break. The boards in MCEC 307 and Seabury N215 are the first ones to be resurfaced. Assuming satisfactory results several additional boards will be scheduled for either spring break or summer.

"One Card" / Access Control

We have begun to deploy Salto locks in the ITS offices as a pilot project before rolling out these new locks in other facilities. This gives us an opportunity to better understand the mechanics of the system and processes entailed for keeping the new system and the old Locknetics system in sync.

We did not have an opportunity to complete the issuance of the new ID card to Emeriti and other affiliate groups during the fall semester, but anticipate being able to address this in the near future.

Under the umbrella of the One Card project, we are working with the Office of Residential Life to improve the interface to managing access to student dorm rooms. Currently an extensive spreadsheet is used to identify dates in which access to rooms are available for student housing. We are replacing

that with a web application that will allow for easier updating of groups, such as athletic teams that may be arriving on campus for pre-season practice. This, of course, is dependent upon the timely entering of information into PeopleSoft, but will provide for a more flexible and stable interface to the lock management systems. As we move forward with this project, we are seeking opportunities to simplify the management of door access, while assuring that we provide appropriate controls.

Starting Out

The Starting Out program web presence continues to undergo refinements. We are currently focusing on the form to collect parent biographical information and the workflow behind that form. Our goal is to directly load the data into the PeopleSoft system, thereby eliminating much of the data entry and ensuring that data is available to the development office earlier in the process. Significant progress had been made on this project during the summer, and the enhancements to the data collection piece will greatly improve the process.

Network & Systems

Two main areas of attention this fall semester have been the planning of the technology needs for the Crescent St. apartment project and the upgrade and extension of campus video surveillance. Campus Safety has identified the need to install an additional 28 exterior cameras across campus, including 10 new blue lights which will provide line-of-sight coverage on campus. We will also be installing additional surveillance cameras in the Library & Information Technology Center and Ferris Athletic Center.

Enterprise and Administrative Initiatives

The upgrade to PeopleSoft version 9.1 was completed the weekend of September 29[th.] The upgrade centered on the "split" of Campus Solution (student/ alumni) data from the Human Capital Management (employee) data.

Partnering with the Office of Human Resources and the Dean of Faculty Office, the PeopleAdmin online applicant tracking system was introduced early November. This tool allows job seekers to search open positions and submit application material on-line, and provides those participating in hiring with tools for managing the process. Search Chairs and committees will have immediate access to all submitted information. It will be used for Tenure-track searches as well as searches for staff positions.

Keeping parent contact information current has been an on-going struggle for several offices across the campus. Thus, we are putting the finishing touches on a small web application that will allow parents (or guardians) of current students to update their own email information. This effort will further reduce the need for paper mailings and allow for more timely dissemination of information.

Another web application that was developed this semester is a dorm furniture inventory system for the Office of Residential life. Making use of QR codes for tagging of dorm room furniture will make the process of keeping track of things much easier.

Under evaluation is the migration of Financial Aid processes from a standalone solution, Powerfaids, to PeopleSoft. The financial aid module was part of the initial PeopleSoft purchase, but at the time was not fully-developed. Significant enhancements to this module now make it a viable solution. Full integration with student records is a major advantage to the potential move to the PeopleSoft environment.

This fall we began discussions with the Dean of Faculty Office and Office of Institutional Research about developing a web-based planning tool that department chairs will use to manage teaching loads. This tool will be used to document courses that will be taught the "next" academic year and identify department staffing requirements. We anticipate being able to begin using this tool for the fall 2013 planning cycle.

Data Security Initiatives

Trinity has begun to participate in a state wide higher education information security group, CHERIS. This group provides us with an opportunity to share best practices, jointly develop security policies and benefit from potential consortial purchase of software.

A couple of thefts of laptops this past semester provides a good reminder of the importance of encrypting your laptop, not storing sensitive data locally and making sure you lock your office door when you are not present. One common theme that has been emphasized in our data security meetings is that there is no better security measure than awareness and that we all share responsibility to safeguard our data.

Wrap-Up

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