We’re Listening To You……

….and IT Services has big plans for the coming year!

Many technology projects are planned for the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 Academic Years, and most of these projects will impact the way you use technology at Miami University, either directly or behind-the-scenes. IT Services has spent the last year asking questions on all three domestic campuses as well as the Luxembourg campus resulting in the preparation of the first Strategic Plan for technology at Miami, and the results are going to be seen over this year! Comments and questions may be directed to John Vaughn, Director, IT Services Client Advocacy & Communications (vaughnjh@muohio.edu, 529-1379).

IMPROVEMENTS IN CLASSROOMS AND OPEN-ACCESS COMPUTING LABS

IT is conducting a university-wide assessment of classroom and open-access computing labs, and is developing recommendations for the implementation of immediate upgrades and improvements. Over 80 classrooms and labs saw changes and upgrades this past summer!

ON-LINE COURSE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM ENHANCEMENT

The effectiveness of the current (Blackboard) on-line course management system is being assessed and in development, is a long-term plan for continuous improvements.

PROGRESS IN ON-LINE COURSE AUGMENTATION/E-LEARNING

Development is under way on a model for a team approach in the creation of on-line course materials that will augment traditional classroom experiences and that will promote the effective development and implementation of distance-learning courses.

MIGRATION TO OHIO’S THIRD FRONTIER NETWORK

IT Services has moved the university data network connection to the Butler County fiber loop and achieved high-speed connectivity to Ohio’s Third Frontier Network. This particularly enhances opportunities and capabilities for Miami’s research computing community.

EXTENSIVE SUPPORT OF RESEARCH COMPUTING

IT Services is identifying “quick win” areas for immediate improvements in the area of information technology support of research. This will be followed by the development of a model that provides a comprehensive spectrum of services and support for distributed high-performance computing. Additionally, a plan will be created to develop and implement a research IT infrastructure and support model to be included in the FY06 budget discussions, a model built on the existing strengths and available resources of the college, schools, libraries, regional campuses, administrative units and other existing groups.

STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL SECURITY IMPROVEMENTS

Under development are new policies and procedures that safeguard university data and personal privacy while respecting intellectual property rights and promoting academic freedom with respect to access to information. IT Services is preparing a model that will ensure a strong foundation for information technology security coordinated with continuous operations planning.

Driving this continuous operations initiative is the need for technology services which would persist after a disaster, such as a fire, terror attack or natural disaster. Improvements are underway to enhance disaster recovery capabilities, using information gained from a study conducted last year.
GOALS BEING IDENTIFIED FOR LITERACY IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
IT Services is developing short and long-term goals to improve information technology literacy for students, faculty and staff.

UPGRADES TO MIAMI'S NETWORK ARCHITECTURE
The MUnet network has served the university well, given that it was designed and implemented in the mid-1990's and has been improved since. IT Services is completing a network assessment to identify major improvements with the intent to ensure the appropriate resilience to disruption in service.

VIRUS PROTECTION FOR MIAMI'S DESKTOP WORKSTATIONS
IT Services has been working to implement new and improved firewall solutions, identify ways to "push" critical updates to users, ensure current virus protection for everyone, and provide self-service "remediation" for users with computer problems. The intent is to protect university assets and data by mitigating risk as much as possible.

COORDINATION OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY-WIDE
At present, information technology policy and governance is distributed throughout the university. The need for more formalized approaches to policy and governance emerged during the strategic planning discussions on all campuses. In progress is the development and implementation of a comprehensive information technology governance model that encompasses IT resources and units across the university. Additionally, development moves forward on the design and implementation of a model for developing IT policies within the governance structure.

EMAIL AND CALENDARING–THE NEXT GENERATION AT MIAMI
A study is now underway evaluating the functionality offered by the current email and calendaring services, and is intended to identify new requirements. This study will determine desired features and will result in a recommendation for a new, integrated architecture in a report to be delivered later this academic year. Any new system will be required to be robust, redundant and recoverable, and must provide a common platform across the university.

Data Storage and Server Hosting Pilot Project
Many university units have developed their own collection of infrastructure services and they are now using staff within their units to provide maintenance. As an ever-increasing amount of attention is required to maintain security and service on technology infrastructure, staff that could be helping units address their unique needs are, instead, maintaining infrastructure. This initiative will provide large amounts of storage at IT Services/Hoyt Hall to departments and units via the network.

OXFORD AREA WIRELESS PILOT
This fall, IT Services expects to begin piloting of a wireless technology for the Oxford-area/Miami University residential community. This is a possible alternative to the current broadband remote access (RoadRunner). A primary goal of this pilot project is to determine if 250+ subscribers can be supported per antenna.
SOFTWARE LICENSING AND MANAGEMENT
As the focus of a study project this year, IT Services will evaluate opportunities for providing universally-available software licenses to support multiple platforms and develop processes to support volume purchasing. Also studied will be the ability to create access to software regardless of geographic location and the offering of central maintenance and clearinghouse capabilities.

NEW WEB PORTAL BEING INVESTIGATED
With many new web portal offerings now available in the marketplace, myMiami has room for improvement. An active study group is pursuing a recommendation for replacement of the current myMiami web portal with a new service offering efficient, seamless and consistent access to university information resources. The implementation of the study group’s recommendation is intended during calendar year 2005.

NEW MANAGEMENT TEAM TAKES THE HELM IN IT SERVICES
With the addition of the VP-IT role at Miami, a new management structure has been implemented for IT Services. The new management team, including new Senior Director positions, consists of existing IT Services employees as well as employees new to the division and the University. With the assistance of a consulting/human resources firm, the new management team has begun professional development activities leading to improved performance management, team-building and enhancement of leadership skills.

CONTINUOUS INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PLANNING
IT Services is actively involved in making operational the information technology strategic planning process. The intent of this process is to ensure ongoing and coordinated information technology planning that aligns with the goals of the university.

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TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION WILL BE ENCOURAGED
IT Services is developing a support model for technology innovation and the early adopters of such a philosophy. Essential to this model will be a mechanism for issuing focused and specialized grants enabling the formation of partnerships within the IT Services client community. Also part of the model will be the development of a process for creating appropriate advanced technology centers.

ONGOING IMPROVEMENTS IN DATA/TELEPHONY INFRASTRUCTURE
IT Services is continually conducting research about new products and services. Such offerings could contribute to the technological advancement of the university’s infrastructure, and opportunities to incorporate new ideas and methods will not be overlooked.

NEW WAYS TO FUND TECHNOLOGY BEING STUDIED
Miami currently does not have a specific technology-funding model to help ensure the ongoing refreshment of information technology for the university. This study will explore, develop and recommend a technology-funding model to be implemented in FY06.

IT PROJECT OFFICE ESTABLISHED
Project management resources will enable the IT Services staff to effectively and efficiently manage projects. The Project Office will provide the tools and guidance necessary to encourage successful project management by establishing project/change management methodology and metrics. Additionally, the Office will establish a single repository of project information and reporting and provide internal consulting and mentoring to IT staff on project management practices.
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS IMPROVEMENTS

With the addition of the VP-IT position at Miami, a comprehensive management system is critical to effective management of information technology across the university. The Vice President is in the process of establishing an IT operational environment that aligns operations and management of information technology across the university and is adequately supported so that costs are effectively managed, services have the resources required, and resource alternatives are explored. In addition, this environment will provide for resources to be shared and used to their maximum potential, prioritize collaboration and continually assess and improve services.

An IT staffing and development plan will also be implemented. This plan will include common job descriptions, professional development, career path development and ongoing training.

CUSTOMER/CLIENT ADVOCACY ROLE ESTABLISHED

IT Services has identified the need for an advocate within the division to take on problems and issues identified by clients who have become frustrated for whatever reason while following the normal processes and procedures. The Client Advocate acts as a liaison between IT Services and the campus community in order to provide problem resolution in an “ombudsman” role.

An essential part of the Client Advocate office is the continued effort to provide better communication between the division and clients about new services and programs. A model for improved communications is being developed to address more effective efforts, both external and internal to the division.

BANNER SUPPORT ENHANCEMENTS COMING

Early fall will see the upgrade of Banner version 5 to 6, which will provide greater functionality as well as revised screen appearances for users of this university-wide software.

Under development is a university-wide plan for the effective and efficient use of Banner that includes system enhancements and ongoing service and support.

IMPROVED DECISION SUPPORT CAPABILITIES ON THE WAY

IT Services is under way in the development of responsive and secure systems to access administrative information for the purpose of facilitating informed decisions, emphasizing a system that focuses on data integrity and effective reporting support.

WIRELESS DEPLOYMENT ON ALL CAMPUSES

Installation and implementation is underway of a wireless access capability for users on all campuses. Residence halls in Oxford lead the timeline for deployment, with regional campuses and Oxford academic buildings to follow in an integrated timeframe. The Luxembourg campus installation is currently planned for the summer of 2005.