Delivering Value – IT Services’ Promise to You

On behalf of IT Services, I recently submitted our response to the University's Five Year Strategic Goals to President Hodge. We see many opportunities for IT Services to contribute to Miami University's third century of excellence and we look forward to discovering the ways that we will be able to partner with other divisions as they pursue their goals.

In supporting Miami's pursuit of its new five-year goals, IT Services will focus on "Delivering Value" this year. Here are some highlights of initiatives on the horizon.

Implementing a new Voice over IP telephone system: Our current telephone system represents outdated technology. With the endorsement of the President's Cabinet and the IT Strategic Advisory Council, an RFP for a Voice over IP (VoIP) system will be issued this month. A new VoIP system will provide a range of new services, as well as yielding a critical cost savings of up to $1.2 million dollars per year. In addition, this initiative eliminates the need to replace or move the outdated switch, estimated by an external consultant as a $7 million capital improvement. Our goal is to implement the new system as early as August 2008 but no later than December 2008. Once we evaluate the RFP responses and negotiate a contract, we will have a better idea of the cost savings and timeline.

Containing the exponential growth of software costs: Hardware and software expenses make up 13% of the annual IT Services budget and the rate of increase of the software portion due to annual maintenance fees hampers IT's ability to be responsive and flexible, particularly in these tight budget times. We are targeting a 10-15% reduction in software costs, or about $400,000 across the University, through focused efforts on negotiating more favorable software licensing arrangements and pruning the trailing edge of services.

Reducing overcapacity in the dial-in modem pool: Use of the dial-in modem pool has dwindled as high-speed connections have become more available and affordable. Currently only 533 students, faculty and staff use this service which costs the University $125,000 per year. Eliminating 244 of 336 phone lines will cause no noticeable impact in service and save $93,000 per year.

By diligently working to contain costs without reducing service quality, IT Services is increasing the funding available to support IT initiatives that will make a significant impact on teaching, learning, research, and administrative activities. I invite you to learn more about how IT Services plans to deliver value to you by reading our response to the President's Strategic Goals, Jan 2008.

Debra Allison
Interim Vice President for Information Technology
New Competitive Process for Requesting Funding for Student Technology Initiatives

A pool of funds from the Student Technology Fee has been created to stimulate the development of innovative student-focused technology projects on the Oxford campus. A total of $525,000 will be available and any student, faculty or staff member may apply for funding. The projects must support the goals articulated when the Student Technology Fee was created: supporting students in achieving their academic program goals, while also enhancing their life at Miami.

The IT Strategic Advisory Council, an IT governance committee chaired by Provost Herbst, recently approved a new plan for distributing the $1.5 million generated annually by the Student Technology Fee. The new plan divides the total fees that are anticipated next year into three portions, described below.

- $525,000 innovation pool to be distributed through a competitive process with proposals reviewed by a committee of 6 students, including a member of the Student Technology Advisory Committee (STAC), and 5 faculty/staff members.
- $525,000 will be allocated to Schools, the College, and the Library for student-focused technology initiatives.
- $450,000 will be allocated to IT Services to pay the continuing staffing costs of services initiated in FY07.

Innovation Proposal Deadline: March 15, 2008

To apply for the innovation pool funds, a proposal must be submitted in accordance with the Student Tech Fee Guidelines for Expenditures, which can be found at the www.muohio.edu/techfee. Any student, faculty member, staff member, groups, or departments on the Oxford campus may submit a proposal. The deadline for proposals this year is March 15, 2008.

All proposals will be reviewed by the Student Technology Fee Proposal Review Team, co-chaired by Carolyn Gard, Senior Director of Academic Technology Services and Sean Weaston, student chair of STAC.

For more information about the student technology fee allocation process, please visit www.muohio.edu/techfee.

Creating Engaging Online Learning Activities Made Easy

Faculty now have a new technology tool to use to create fun, interactive activities that help students master course material: Respondus StudyMate.

Respondus StudyMate is desktop software that Miami has site-licensed for use on all Miami campuses. StudyMate creates Flash-based activities such as flash cards, pick-a-letter (like hangman), fact cards, fill in the blank puzzles, crosswords, matching games, challenge games (for one or two players, like Jeopardy!), quizzes and glossaries. All of the activities can be played on either Macs or PCs. Some of the activities can also be exported for use on students’ iPods or Play Station Portables. You can view sample activities on the Study Mate demo page (www.respondus.com/studymate/samples.shtml).

StudyMate activities are created by using the StudyMate software’s wizard-style interface and importing a formatted Word document or a publisher’s Respondus test bank. The resulting files can be uploaded directly into Blackboard.

Note: Though the output of StudyMate can be seen on any platform, the StudyMate software is currently available only for computers running Microsoft Windows.

Windows users can download the StudyMate software and user guide from Miami’s software download site at www.muohio.edu/software and install it on both office and home computers.

For more information about StudyMate, please contact Advanced Learning Technologies at 513-529-6068 or alt@muohio.edu.
Data Mining Workshop for Academic Researchers to be Held Thursday, February 21

Miami faculty, graduate students and others who need to analyze large amounts of data to uncover patterns for academic research purposes have a valuable tool available to them: SAS Enterprise Miner software running on the RedHawk High Performance Computing (HPC) cluster.*

A consultant from SAS will be on campus on Thursday, February 21 to present an all day workshop introducing data mining and the SAS Enterprise Miner tool.

According to SAS, “the workshop is designed for data analysts and qualitative experts as well as those with a less technical background who want a general understanding of data mining.”

This workshop is sponsored by the Miami University Center for the Advancement of Computational Research, Miami University Libraries, and the Research Computing Services unit of IT Services.

*IMPORTANT: Please note that the SAS Enterprise Miner software on the RedHawk HPC cluster is licensed for academic use only, i.e., for classes or faculty research.

Sharpen Your Excel Skills with Excel 2007 Workshops

Do you use Microsoft Excel regularly but think you could be using it more effectively? Or do you have tasks you think Microsoft Excel could help you with but are just not sure how to get started using it?

Many faculty and staff indicate that they fall into one of these categories – which is the driving force behind a new series of hands-on Excel 2007 workshops that IT Services is offering this semester. Through these workshops attendees gain a solid grounding in how to use Excel 2007 to manage, manipulate, and analyze data.

Excel 2007 workshops include:

- **New Features (2 hours):** targeted to proficient Excel 2003 users, this workshop will get you up to speed quickly with the new interface and new capabilities in Excel 2007.

- **Core Skills Series:**
  1. **Workbook Fundamentals I and II (2 and 1-1/2 hours respectively):** designed for those who are new to Excel or have never had formal Excel training, these workshops help attendees gain important, basic skills that are fundamental to using Excel efficiently and effectively.
  2. **Using Formulas & Functions (2 hours):** addressing one of the most popular Excel topics, this workshop introduces Excel’s function library and walks attendees through creating both simple and complex formulas and using select functions.
  3. **Analyzing Data with Charts and PivotTables (2 hours):** designed for those who want to quickly transform data into information and present it in a visually compelling way, this workshop walks attendees through Excel 2007 capabilities that allow you to do just that.

TIP: If you plan to attend multiple workshops in the core skills series, IT Services strongly recommends taking the workshops in the order listed above.

For complete workshop descriptions and to register, please visit the Microsoft Office 2007 topic in TRAIN (www.admin.muohio.edu/cfapps/train/topicdetails.cfm?id=883).

In TRAIN, you will also find workshops on Microsoft Word 2007 and PowerPoint 2007. For Mac users, Office 2008 workshops are under development (see the “Office 2008 for the Mac: Analysis and Availability” article in this issue for more information).

If you would like to discuss training needs or offerings, please contact Leslie Smith, Manager of Learning & Information Services, at 513-529-5530 or e-mail lis@muohio.edu.
Office 2008 for the Mac: Analysis and Availability

IT Services has been conducting extensive testing of the Microsoft Office 2008 Suite and preparing for its release here at Miami. The team’s assessment of Office 2008 is “there are still many issues with the production release and we have actively informed Microsoft about these issues. However, there are also many new features that enhance productivity and help manage information effectively.”

Office 2008 is currently available for personal purchase and will soon be ready for distribution to university-owned computers.

- **Personal purchase:** Microsoft’s Office 2008 can be purchased by faculty, staff and students for personally-owned computers at Miami’s discounted prices via e-academy (visit www.muohio.edu/microsoft and select e-academy from the links on the left). Note: IT Services reports that the “Economy Shipping” option typically delivers the software to this area in about 8 days rather than the 6 weeks indicated. Quicker methods of shipment are also available.

- **University-owned computers:** IT Services is currently preparing the installer that will be used to distribute Microsoft Office 2008 to university-owned Macs. This “push” will be done on an as-requested basis via Altiris, and details will be announced very soon.

What’s New (and Missing) in Office 2008?

Given Miami’s move to the muConnect Exchange e-mail environment this past summer, Entourage 2008 is one of the most anticipated components of the Office 2008 suite. There is both good news and not so good news with Entourage 2008.

- **The good news:**
  - Exchange connectivity is faster and more reliable.
  - The search is much faster and takes advantage of the Spotlight feature in Mac OS in order to find information, along with attachments.
  - Within the calendar, it is now somewhat easier to schedule meetings and manage meeting invitations and is more consistent with Outlook.
  - The new My Day and To Do list features provide a single place to manage schedules and tasks.
  - You can now configure Out-of-Office messages within Entourage.
  - There is a Favorites Bar that can be customized to display shortcuts.

- **The not so good news:**
  - There are not nearly as many new user-oriented features in Entourage 2008 as anticipated and desired.

The ability to share files with Office 2007 users is another key capability for Miami – and again there is both good news and not so good news. The good news is Office 2008 can read Office 2007 documents and vice versa since they both use the new XML file format (reflected by the addition of an “x” to the file extension, eg. .docx, .pptx, and .xlsx). The not so good news: testing has revealed that there may be font and formatting issues if an Office 2007 document is edited with Office 2008 and then reopened in Office 2007.

Additional new capabilities in Word, PowerPoint and Excel:

- A new "Elements Gallery" has been added to Word, PowerPoint and Excel. Within the Elements Gallery you can add SmartArt graphics, WordArt, charts and tables, as well as find templates that help you create professional documents within minutes.

- The new Office Toolbox provides one place to find the Formatting Palette, Object Palette, Compatibility Report, Scrapbook, Reference Tools and more.

- There are many designer-quality templates that users can take advantage of with special effects such as 3-D, transparency, and shadows.
Running both Office 2004 and Office 2008

IT Services strongly advises against running both Office 2004 and Office 2008. **Use of Entourage 2004 and Entourage 2008 on the same computer will cause data loss or corruption.**

Office 2008 Training

IT Services is preparing a 90-minute “New Features” workshop for Office 2008 which will be available after spring break. Look for announcements on myMiami and in the Miami e-Report.

For More Information

Microsoft’s Office 2008 web site, at www.microsoft.com/mac/products/Office2008, provides video clips and many other resources to introduce the new capabilities in Office 2008.

If you have questions about Office 2008 at Miami, please contact the IT Services Support Desk at 513-529-7900 or supportdesk@muohio.edu.

Bogus “Official” Miami E-mail Asking for Account Information Circulating: Don’t Respond!

If you receive an e-mail message that appears to be from a legitimate Miami University address (MUOHIO) and asks for your user name, e-mail password and other personal information, delete the message immediately. No official university office will ever ask for you to disclose your MUnet password via e-mail or any other means.

These messages are examples of phishing, the latest spam technique used to gain access to personal accounts in attempts to steal sensitive data. A current phishing e-mail tells users to send their ID and password and goes on to threaten that users who do not respond will lose their accounts. The link in the message may include a bogus Miami University web link for the recipient to confirm their e-mail address.

Messages like these should be immediately deleted. Do not click on any links in the message or go to the web address listed in the e-mail. Never supply passwords, banking information, Social Security Numbers or other sensitive information by clicking a link in an e-mail. Treat any e-mail that asks for sensitive information as a phishing scam.

If you have questions about this or any other suspicious e-mail message, please contact the IT Services Support Desk at supportdesk@muohio.edu or call 513-529-7900.
Miami’s Emergency Text Messaging System Tested and Used

Miami's Emergency Text Messaging System has been put to work several times since the start of the Spring 2008 semester: it was formally tested on Wednesday, January 23, 2008 and subsequently used to deliver several weather-related “campus closed” messages the week of February 10, 2008. Early results give the system high marks, but with some room for improvement in the registration process and receipt of alerts on the e-mail side.

Students, faculty and staff were invited, beginning this past fall, to register a cell phone number and/or their e-mail address to receive emergency messages. To date, just over 5,000 cell phone numbers and e-mail addresses have been registered. If you have not yet registered, Miami strongly encourages you to do so. You can find more information about the system and register at www.muohio.edu/emergencytextmessaging.

January 23rd Test Results

A test message was sent via e2Campus to the 4,852 cell phone numbers and e-mail addresses in the system. A link to a follow up survey was e-mailed shortly after the test message was sent and 3,492 users completed the survey, for a very high 72% rate of return.

Below are some of the early findings:

- Students comprised 80% of the survey respondents (Faculty – 6%, Staff – 14%).
- First message delivered on 1/23/2008 11:52 a.m.; Last message delivered on 1/23/2008 11:59 a.m. (This statistic was provided by e2Campus)
- 80% of the registered users read the test text message within the first 15 minutes; 97% within one hour.
- The top 3 cell phone providers registered with the system were Verizon (55%), AT&T/Cingular (16%), and Cincinnati Bell (11%).
- Users who registered an e-mail address were more likely to have not gotten the test message (20%) than those registering cell phone numbers (3%).

Further follow-up with users, cell phone providers and e2Campus will be conducted and a detailed report will be forwarded to the Institutional Response Team by the end of February 2008. For more information about the Miami Emergency Text Messaging System, please visit www.muohio.edu/emergencytextmessaging.

Bill Miley Appointed Senior Director of Information Systems and Services

IT Services is pleased to announce that Bill Miley has been named the new Senior Director for Information Systems and Services (ISS), effective March 1. Bill has been with IT Services for more than 25 years in increasingly responsible positions and has been serving as the interim Senior Director of ISS for the past several months.

According to Debra Allison, Interim Vice President for Information Technology, “Bill comes to this position with a deep commitment to Miami University, its staff, faculty and students, and to the success of ISS and IT Services. He is well prepared to lead the staff of ISS forward. I am impressed with his enthusiasm and vision for meeting the challenges we all face.”
IT Services Refunds Residence Hall Voice Mail Fees

Students living in residence halls will not be seeing a $12 fee for voice mail on their Bursar bill this semester. Additionally, any students who paid the $12 fee for voice mail last semester will see a $12 credit on their bursar bill or a check for the refund amount. Voice mail service in the residence halls will continue through spring semester at no charge.

The refund has been initiated in response to concerns raised by the Associated Student Government (ASG) about the current approach to voice mail which requires students who do not plan to use the service to cancel it within the first two weeks of class. A new approach to the voice mail service, in line with the ASG’s request for an “opt-in” service, is planned to go into effect this coming summer as part of the implementation of a “Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)” phone system. More details on changes in phone and TV services in the residence halls will be coming in the April issue of TechTalk.

Please contact Cathy McVey, Information Technology Director of Customer Relations & Communications at mcveyc@muohio.edu or 513-529-1379 if you have questions about voice mail service in the residence halls or the voice mail refund.

Microsoft Word 2007 Training Can Help with Research Paper Writing

IT Services provides many different avenues for students to receive either electronic or personal instruction on using various software applications. One of these may be just the right option for those who write research papers.

Microsoft Word 2007: Creating Academic Documents is a workshop that provides a hands-on experience for attendees in learning how to use new features in Word 2007 that simplify creating and editing academic and research documents. This workshop focuses on using the various elements of the References tab in Word 2007 to create the following items:

- Table of contents
- Headers, footers and pagination
- Footnotes and endnotes
- Citations and bibliographies
- Indexes
- Graphics captions

Individual sessions for this workshop will be held in room 362, Gaskill Hall during the following times:

- February 19, 1:00-3:00 PM
- March 14, 9:30-11:30 AM
- April 15, 9:30-11:30 AM
- May 13, 9:00-11:00 AM

In addition, IT Services provides a wide-range of instructor-led workshops on other Word topics, as well as courses for Excel and PowerPoint. Students can check the entire workshop schedule and register for sessions by using the TRAIN registration system at www.muohio.edu/TRAIN. Once in TRAIN, click “Learning Opportunities”, “Topics”, and “Microsoft Office” to view all of the available workshops.
Sungard Operational Data Store Facilitates Meaningful Reporting

The Sungard (Banner) Operational Data Store (ODS) was successfully installed and loaded over the winter break. This success is due to the efforts of Banner clients in nearly every administrative office as well as many members of IT services. Additional validation of data and refinement of the data structure in the ODS will continue for the next few months.

The ODS is a version of Banner data specifically designed to facilitate reporting, regardless of what reporting tool is used. In technical terms, the data in the ODS is de-normalized. In practical terms that means the data is arranged in a way to allow easier access to related data.

For example, until the ODS, to produce a list of names, addresses and phone numbers for a specific set of people, report-writers needed to access at least five Banner tables. Now, with the ODS, there is one view that contains all the information to create the same report. Early feedback from clients indicates that the new data source is easier to use for reporting.

The ODS contains baseline Banner data and it is refreshed nightly from the production Banner system. One of the first additions we will make to the ODS will be to add Recruitment Plus data from Admission. This data will be used to develop an enrollment model. Additional data will be added in the next few years.

The successful installation of the ODS is the first foundational step for decision support at Miami. Future projects may include designing and developing an enrollment and retention model, as well as selecting and implementing a data warehouse. The needs for business intelligence analysis and reporting capabilities are many and varied and we now have a firm set of data to begin addressing these needs. Additionally, IT Services has made a commitment to continuing to provide and support WebFocus and Brio ReportBuilder for three years as work continues on determining the business intelligence/reporting tools that best meet Miami’s needs and evolving data environment.

For more information about the Operational Data Store or Miami's business intelligence initiatives, please contact Phyllis Wykoff at 513-529-5337 or wykoffpa@muohio.edu.

Ask a Tech!

The IT Services Support Desk is staffed with people who address lots of technology questions every day.

Now, in TechTalk’s new “Ask a Tech!” column, we have created a forum to answer general technology questions and we promise not to use “geek speak”! If you have a technology question – particularly one you think may be of interest to your fellow students – or if you have always wondered why something works the way it does in the tech world, shoot it our way at askatech@muohio.edu. Then stay tuned for answers in future editions of TechTalk!

Of course, if you have a time-sensitive question or problem, please contact the IT Services Support Desk directly at 513-529-7900 or supportdesk@muohio.edu. We’re staffed around the clock from Sunday at 9 am to Friday at 8 pm and on Saturdays from 9 am to 5 pm to provide help when you need it.
Smartphone Pilot to Explore Innovative Uses of Mobile Devices on Campus

Members of the Student Technology Advisory Committee and select faculty members will be trying out new mobile wireless devices, or smartphones, as part of a pilot to investigate how these tools can be used in the classroom and beyond.

The smartphones to be evaluated include BlackBerrys, iPhones, and Windows Mobile devices and will be subscribed to Cincinnati Bell, AT&T or Verizon Wireless. The variety of devices will be studied to understand the functionality of each in academic and social environments. The carriers will be tested to determine which has the best coverage in residence halls and academic buildings.

Using smartphones, students and faculty have access to their e-mail, calendar and tasks without being near a computer. This allows them to schedule group meetings, read course assignments and check e-mail anywhere. The pilot is seeking other creative uses that students and faculty may find useful.

IT Services will be managing the distribution and support of the smartphones. Participants will be given a chance to test several models of devices and monthly surveys will be given to the participants. The pilot is expected to begin by early March and will continue into the 2008-2009 academic year. Feedback from pilot participants will be used to understand what services should be provided for smartphones.

Student E-mail Mailbox Allocation Set at 1G

On January 20, student mailbox allocations were implemented that limit student mailboxes to 1 Gigabyte (GB) of space. While this might sound like an imposition, less than 200 students had enough messages in their accounts to be affected. The allocations were put in place to conserve space on the muConnect servers, but that doesn't mean you can't keep all your important messages. You can store unlimited amounts of e-mail offline, on your personal computer.

If your mailbox approaches or exceeds the 1GB limit, you will receive e-mail warnings to alert you to the size of your mailbox and the consequences if you do not take action. Depending on how big your mailbox is, you may lose the ability to send and/or receive new messages if you do not take action to reduce your mailbox size.

E-mail is an official method of university communication, and you should manage your mailbox to ensure you always have access to your muConnect e-mail account. If your e-mail account is blocked from receiving new messages because it exceeds the allocation, you will not receive e-mail from any source, including Miami's emergency notification system. In the future, emergency messages may be possible; for now that feature is blocked.

Please refer to the following Knowledge Base article for specifics on the student e-mail allocation or if you need assistance with lowering your consumption of disk space: www.muohio.edu/kb/case1303.

If you have questions about the university’s allocation standards or if you need assistance transferring e-mail to a personal computer, please contact the IT Services Support Desk at 513-529-7900 or supportdesk@muohio.edu.
Update from Miami's Student Technology Advisory Committee Correspondent

The Student Technology Advisory Committee (STAC) is a powerful communications vehicle for students to voice praise and concern over campus technology. The 16 student representatives span skill levels and majors. The STAC is dedicated to the free flow of communication and maintaining a transparent appearance. The availability of accomplishments and discussion histories posted to the STAC web site (www.muohio.edu/STAC) is one example of this commitment.

The committee is multipurpose. It has a self-proclaimed goal of enhancing the student experience with technology at Miami University. Functions include making policy recommendations on technology matters, providing input on past, current, and future technology available, as well as address strategic student issues.

The STAC has a number of initiatives currently underway:

- A smartphone pilot program is being introduced to evaluate students' use of market-standard phones. STAC members are testing Blackberries, iPhones, and Windows Mobile devices to name just a few (see the “Smartphone Pilot to Explore Innovative Uses of Mobile Devices on Campus” article in this issue). Feedback by the committee's students will be invaluable to understanding what services should be provided for smartphones.

- With the myriad of features offered by Outlook or Entourage, the STAC is pursuing ways to educate students on the uses of these new tools.

- An introduction of lifestyle initiatives (movies, shows, music) to students is also under review. This would allow students to access a library of media paid for by a technology fee. Feedback is being compiled to consider this initiative.

The STAC considers our future with optimism. The students are considering methods for guiding faculty and peers to use Blackboard and other available resources. The jungle of the Knowledge Base pages are being contained and revised for better user access and navigation. While these student representatives are making significant contributions towards Miami’s future technology, they cannot know all of your input. The committee is always looking for constructive feedback from fellow students, send your comments to itadvisory@muohio.edu.

For the IT Student Advisory Committee
Greg Salomon