



COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS

Information Technology Services

To: Holy Cross Faculty

From: Ellen Keohane, Director of Information Technology Services

Date: August 22, 2005

I am pleased to send you this year's update on projects and events in Information Technology Services (ITS) that may be of interest to you as a faculty member. Last year was full of activity and we accomplished a great deal. The year ahead looks to be busy again, with many projects directly related to teaching and learning support.

Several months ago, I heard the phrase "Festina Lente," the motto of 16th Century Italian publisher and inventor of the *italics* typeface, Aldus Manutius. This paradoxical Latin phrase means "hasten slowly" or "move quickly, slowly." I wrote it on the whiteboard in my office and look at it often—reflecting on how this theme of quickness combined with a firmness of purpose can apply to ITS. It seems like it does. While technologies continue to change rapidly, a solid foundation of quality products and service reliability is critical. With a stable framework in place (the "slowly" part), we are better able to add technologies to meet your teaching and research needs (the "quickly" part). The activities of the past year—and particularly the coming year—have "Festina Lente" in mind.

Last Year's Activities and Events

- Though we were sad to see Jennifer Ruggiero leave the College, we hired a new Assistant Director of Instructional Technology and User Services, James Pinkerton—who has quickly helped us move forward in a number of areas in help desk and desktop support. Several faculty helped in the interview process.
- Service levels remained high, with a 12% drop in Help Desk calls (though the number had spiked last year because of new Internet viruses).
- We increased our bandwidth to the commodity Internet by 33% (to 20mb).
- Several academic labs were upgraded with new computers this year, including the Millard media lab, a Biology lab, and a Psychology lab— and replaced some computers in the Multimedia Resource Center, General Chemistry lab, and the Sociology lab. We also replaced 16 instructor station computers in classrooms.
- Over the summer, we contracted for a new online training service for Microsoft products that we will offer to students (we already have licenses for faculty and staff). This might be an option for you if students in your courses need to have skills in Excel, PowerPoint, Access, Word, or Windows XP. Anne Barry manages this service. You can contact her or me if interested.
- The Faculty File System was re-implemented within the PeopleSoft SA system.

- Of the more than \$37,000 spent on desktop software, 61% was for academic departments (another 16% for ITS and 23% for other administrative offices). This was a shift from prior years that I was glad to be able to support.
- Blackboard was used in new ways, such as the Gateway orientation information and Student Government elections. I feel there is more we could do with Blackboard. Let me know if you have ideas.
- We upgraded PeopleSoft Student Administration the week of November 22. The project was on-time and under budget. You and your students now have more extensive self-service capabilities for student records, financial aid, and housing. Thanks to Margaret Freije for her leadership on the upgrade, as we had turnover in ITS that put extra responsibilities on her.
- We initiated a document imaging project, with initial focus in Admissions and Student Records. By imaging paper documents, we hope for better access to information for those who need it.
- A substantial amount of our web site was transitioned into the Mediasurface web content management system. The emphasis has been more on administrative areas (18 departments), but Educational Technology is in the new system.
- We upgraded the core email, file, and print services to new versions. You can now access your P: and M: drives from off-campus through a web browser.
- We added a Listserv service for broadcast-only mailing lists.
- We activated wireless throughout Wheeler Hall. Feedback from students was very positive, leading to a program for the coming year to put wireless into most of the residence halls. Further, we added wireless to all remaining libraries (Music, Science, and Rehm), Jesuit housing on City View Street, lower Kimball, Hogan 2nd floor, and Mathematics. Requests for wireless should come in to me. The IT Steering Committee (the President, all VPs, and myself) approve requests.
- We upgraded the core firewall and network switch to accommodate new needs for performance and security.
- We helped with the implementation of a Bookstore eCommerce presence through a third-party, Sequoia Systems. Textbooks are not yet part of the online bookstore system—the emphasis at this time is on clothing, gifts, and general books.
- With significant faculty and student input, as well as internal and external research, we are drafting a strategic plan for Information Technology. The final report will be completed this month and submitted to the Strategic Planning Committee.

Phew! And I'm probably missing a few things!

In addition to the project-based work listed above, it was a good year for the department in terms of people. Vickie Flores was hired in December as the Assistant Director for Applications Development (joining us from Houston, TX). Jim Noonan was promoted to Assistant Director for Change Management. I already mentioned James Pinkerton joining us. They, along with Harold Knapp and myself, make up the ITS management team—one

that I feel is the strongest my department has had in many years. The department as a whole is also stronger. We have a good mix of new people, with their fresh insights and skills, and “old timers” (I can say that because I am one) who have the institutional knowledge and experience. If there are any areas where you feel we are coming up short, then please talk with me about it. I expect to report continued improvements next year.

Academic Year 2005-2006 Plans

The following activities are planned for the coming year. I welcome any and all input, so let me know if you want more information about any of these projects, would like to get involved, or want to make suggestions on directions/priorities. We also have the Educational Technology Advisory Group (ETAG), with membership from the Dean’s office, Library, and Faculty, through which to channel feedback and suggestions.

- You will soon be able to open a help desk ticket via a web browser—and check on the status of any existing ticket. Of course, you’ll still be able to call the Help Desk for assistance as you do now.
- Working with Jesse Anderson, we will develop a new multi-year plan for classroom projection and computer upgrades and begin the first phase.
- Stein 208 is, as you read this, being transformed into a modern, well-equipped classroom space, with furniture to support interactive and collaborative teaching and learning, quality audio-visual systems, and both wireless and wired network access. Exciting!
- Our NSF funding for Internet 2 membership expires this year. We need to decide whether to continue membership. Faculty input will be important.
- The digital imaging needs analysis will complete (thank you to those who replied to the recent survey), with recommendations made on future directions.
- Wireless will be added to six more residence halls during the school year, with the remaining three coming next summer, pending wiring upgrades.
- The PeopleSoft Human Resources system will be upgraded to the current, web-based version, with an analysis of which self-service capabilities will be offered to the employees of the College.
- The College web pages will be enhanced with Flash presentations and a redesign.
- The Google search engine will be implemented for better search capabilities of the College web site.
- An intrusion prevention and detection system will be implemented to improve our protection from Internet viruses and worms, spyware, and other “malware” prevalent on all college campuses.
- New on-site services will be implemented for Message Boards, Chat, and possibly Blogging. These are now only available through third-party services.
- Classroom scheduling through Resource 25, which has been pending for a number of years, will be implemented.

- Technology support for the beginnings of a College-wide effort on management reporting and data warehousing will commence. This topic has been on our “radar” for a number of years and is getting attention through the strategic planning process.

Recalling “Festina Lente,” it is important that we ensure a solid infrastructure, applications, and service foundation. This will be done in a number of ways, such as:

- Cross-training within ITS and between ITS and end user departments on the applications already in place.
- More and better use of the general-purpose systems available to the community, such as Blackboard, Brio reporting, web content management, document management, and others.
- Finishing those “loose ends” never completed during initial implementation of applications.
- Find more opportunities for business process improvements, now that we have a better understanding of the capabilities of our College applications.

On behalf of the entire Information Technology Services department, I wish you a successful academic year. Our goal is to support you in your teaching and research by offering appropriate and reliable technology services. Please let me know if you would like to talk further about technology at Holy Cross. I would like very much to hear from you.