

Welcome Back; We're Here to Help

On behalf of the Division of Information Technology (IT), I'd like to welcome you to the fall semester at Western. In this special addition to *The Reporter* you'll find information on the IT initiatives—Start-IT 04—we've been working on that will directly benefit you.



While the seasons are changing, our commitment to supporting the university's mission by providing a reliable, comprehensive information technology environment has not changed. If you've questions or concerns regarding IT or the initiatives we share with you here, please let us know how we can help. We wish you a successful semester.

Tom Franke
Chief Information Officer

IT Advisory Councils Involve Campus in Decision Making

A newly organized set of councils will provide a means of campus feedback and encourage campus-wide involvement in IT policy and decision making in the fall semester.

The three distinct but cooperative councils are the University Advisory Council, the Educational Technologies Advisory Council, and the Administrative Systems Advisory Council. Each is organized under the supervision of Tom Franke, chief information officer, who regularly reviews and assesses the effectiveness of the councils. "The idea here is to get broad involvement on the part of the campus community," said Franke.

Each of the groups will be comprised of between 10 and 15 members. The Educational Technologies Council has already been formed and conducted its first regular meeting during the spring semester. The other two councils are in the process of finalizing their membership. Each council is composed of faculty, staff, and students.

The University Advisory Council advises the CIO on IT high-level policy and planning issues. In collaboration with other advisory groups, it participates in developing a strategic technology plan for Western that supports the university's overall strategic plan. This group is chaired by the CIO.

The Educational Technology Advisory Council advises the CIO on issues, policies, and plans related to educational technologies, including labs and classrooms, as well as the student computer requirement. It addresses issues that are brought from technology committees in order to assure responsiveness to college-specific needs; it also addresses issues related to ResNet and student computing. The group includes representatives from each college, the Division of Student Affairs and the student body. It is chaired by the Associate CIO for Educational Technologies.

The Administrative Systems Advisory Council advises the CIO on issues, policies, and plans related to administrative systems, including the enterprise business system of the university. It addresses issues of coordination in implementing operations, changes, upgrades, and data integrity and consistency among the business systems. This council includes representatives from each of the functional areas responsible for one of the business systems, and it is chaired by the director of applications development and support.

For more information on the roles of the councils or on becoming involved, contact Franke at 227-7282.

Firewall to Bring Enhanced Security, Services

The IT Division will be implementing a firewall during the fall semester. A device that allows the network to be filtered and controlled by the system administrator, the firewall will protect each Western network user's personal information from intrusion and threats such as hacker activity.

An enhancement to the existing network security, the firewall will realize a huge decrease in the number of systems compromised on campus. "It will provide increased reliability in our computing

environment," said Scott Swartzentruber, director of networking services.

The enhanced security the firewall brings will enable Western to increase vital services in areas such as recruitment, enrollment, and admissions. The university also will meet the necessary security standards required by many of the outside services, such as financial institutions, that regularly collaborate with the university.

Throughout the semester, the IT Division will be working to identify user's firewall needs. A specific e-mail on this

topic will be sent out to the Western community during the semester, said Swartzentruber. "Look out for this e-mail," he urged. "Your response will help us better serve you."

In addition to the e-mail, an area of the IT Web site will be dedicated to the firewall and its implementation. Visit the IT Web site at its.wcu.edu.

For more information on the firewall, contact Swartzentruber at scotts@email.wcu.edu or via the ITS Help Desk at 227-7487.

Statistical Software To Help in Research

Campus researchers will have a powerful new tool at their disposal this fall as Information Technology makes Statistical Analysis Systems software (SAS) available to campus users.

SAS is a program that allows organizations to pull together vast amounts of diverse data and translate it into comprehensible information, allowing for an improved decision-making process once research has been accumulated.

"SAS is an entirely different breed of business-class software," said Chris Snyder of Educational Technologies. "It will provide new capabilities for several departments, going far beyond previous systems like SPSS and MINITAB."

Unlike previous statistical software available on campus that met most academic requirements, SAS is set to a professional business standard of number crunching; this update should lead to several significant advantages, according to Snyder.

The system is proving to offer some unexpected advancements as well. In addition to uses in expected areas

such as business, sociology, education, and psychology, SAS will be implemented in a mapping project by the Department of Geosciences and Natural Resources Management this fall.

"SAS has been around since the 1970s, but it has undergone a significant change in that time. Initially, it was known exclusively as a programming language. By the 1990s, however, it was translated into an infinitely more accessible point-and-click program."

Snyder said he hopes researchers who might not have a background in programming languages but who could benefit from the more powerful system will be encouraged to seek training in SAS.

Educational Technologies will be offering workshops to train faculty members in the use of SAS during the upcoming semester. A schedule of dates can be found on the Information Technology Web site at www.wcu.edu/etech/. If unable to attend one of the workshops, faculty may schedule an

appointment at the Sandbox in Hunter Library.

The new version of SAS will soon be used at the Highlands Biological Station in a project involving students from UNC Chapel Hill as part of the Carolina Environmental Program. Twelve students will stay at the station through the fall 2004 semester to gain hands-on experience with this technology.

Lisa Mazzarelli, associate director of Highlands Biological Station, said that she was excited to use SAS in her upcoming research. "It is certainly my statistical package of choice," Mazzarelli said. "I learned to use it in graduate school and I like how comprehensive and flexible it can be."

SAS was developed locally in Cary, North Carolina by a firm that routinely works with The University of North Carolina system. It comes to the university courtesy of a five-year grant that will expire at the end of this school year.

For more information, call the ITS Help Desk at 227-7487.

Western to Pay-for-Print Beginning in October

Western will charge for print copies at all open access student computer labs and Hunter Library beginning Monday, October 18.

In implementing the "pay-for-print" system, the university's goals are simple cost recovery, ensuring that people pay for what they use and reducing the amount of paper wasted. Funds that were previously used to support "free" printing will enable technology and services in the computing labs and library to be kept more up-to-date.

The new printing system will be installed in Hunter Library's open access area, Hunter computing lab and labs in Forsyth 320, Killian 268 (during open lab hours), and Moore 202. The system will include new printers and a new color laser printer in the Hunter computing lab. While the machinery has been installed for the start of the fall semester, charging for prints will not begin until October, with the exception of color prints.

Printing charges will be eight cents per black and white page using a Western CatCard; ten cents using coins. Cat Cash is the only option in the student computer labs; coins can be used in the library's public area (not in the Hunter computer lab, however). A new service this year, a color laser printer has been installed in Hunter Library; color copies will be 75 cents a page.

Under the pay-for-print system, a document will not go straight to the chosen printer; instead, it will be held in a print queue. The user will go to a print-release station located in each facility, find their print job in a directory listing, and see how many pages it is and how much it will cost to print. The document will print only if it is released to the printer and if the user has CatCash on their card (if using a card). IT recommends that users plan ahead and keep CatCash on their card to pay for printing in the labs and library.

Another pay-for-print service of special note to students is the ability to print from their residence hall to any of the print-release stations on campus.

A further service to printer users, the IT Division is promoting alternatives to printing. Suggestions include saving a document to a disk, converting it to a PDF, or emailing it to an electronic mailbox to read and reference at a later date.

Informational posters will be placed in the library and computing labs to announce the pay-for-print system's official launch. More detailed literature on costs, location, and related information will be forthcoming.

For more information on pay-for-print, please contact the ITS Help Desk at 227-7487.

Banner Comes to Campus; Increases Service

Administrative systems will soon be receiving a much-needed update as the new Banner project finally gets off the ground this fall.

Banner, Western's core business system, will be increasing its service levels to allow for easier, around-the-clock access. This technological update keeps pace with similar upgrades at other universities throughout the state.

Banner is a huge institutional project that will take a full seven years to implement. Those sections affected by the upgrade include areas as diverse as alumni records, fundraising, student records, financial aid, as well as many others.

"This upgrade and modernization is ultimately geared to serving the university community," said Tom Franke, chief information officer. "The ultimate goal is to bring a more unified and integrated computer-based service to the campus."

The first step in the Banner project will specifically affect alumni records and services and fundraising records. This will be followed in the spring by an update to financial aid and student information. Both changes will prove to be cost saving and to raise efficiency over the current systems.

Web Publishing Gets Support

The IT Division and the Office of Public Relations are combining efforts to assist Web publishing at Western.

Beginning this fall, as a result of committee recommendations, two new Web publishing software programs will be available for students, faculty and staff. Macromedia Contribute, a program that offers point-and-click simplicity will be offered for the first time along with the industry standard for Web publishing professionals, Macromedia Dreamweaver.

The availability of Web publishing software is a result of a joint campus committee that began the task of determining software standards for Web publishing in January 2004. The committee examined the various Web publishing roles and needs of campus users and looked at industry standards and best practices to guide their decision-making process. The result was a series of recommendations for software, training and support of Web publishing for Western.

First steps for the fall, pending funding, will be to make the recommended software available in teaching and learning areas followed by support for departmental users. This would include installing the software in campus computer classrooms and in the primary student computer lab in Hunter Library.

Implementing the training and support recommendations is included in fall 2004 IT Division efforts. Logistical planning has already begun, staff training is underway, and online resources are being identified.

For more information, contact Bob Orr at e-mail orr@email.wcu.edu or call 227-7327.

The Banner project has been in the works for several years, according to Franke. The university is currently working with technology that is significantly outdated. The general operating system is over 20 years old; some of the hardware is over nine years old. Franke said it is important that the technology be brought up to date in order to accommodate newer improvements to the operating system.

The Banner upgrade is being conducted in collaboration with the University of North Carolina Shared Services Alliance, an association that consists of most of the 16 universities in the UNC system. Western is a full member of the alliance.

For more information on Banner, contact Edna Waldrop at 227-3223.

Work Continues on Strategic Plan

In order to keep pace with rapid changes in technology, the Western Educational Technology Strategic Plan will be in continued development through the fall semester.

While the plan will ultimately focus on enhancing the educational technology strengths of Western and meeting the needs of the mission of the university, the groundwork is currently being laid to develop a specific and comprehensive plan.

Providing leadership for the strategic plan is Newton Smith, chair of the Faculty Senate, and David Luginbuhl, associate professor of computer science.

The group spent this summer analyzing response from the Faculty Senate Information Technology Survey, examining consultants' reports, visiting other institutions to view strategic plans, and interviewing all educational technologies staff and key members of the IT and distance education divisions.

Findings from the summer research revealed historical organizational conflicts, a lack of commitment to academic technology planning, and a lack of resources and staffing for IT sufficient to support the needs of the university.

Planning items for the fall include: the posting of the Faculty Senate Report summary to the Web; the development of a core series of questions for college deans, their advisory committees and departments; the testing of these questions with departments and the Office of University Planning; and a review of how the strategic plan fits into the overall IT strategic plan.

"In visiting every department, we want to hear how individual faculty and disciplines see using educational technologies so that Western may prepare for the future," said Smith.

For more information, contact Smith at 227-3966 or by email at smithn@email.wcu.edu.

Process Speeds New Accounts

The IT Division announces an improvement in the new account request process for faculty and staff—a rapid response with a two-business-day turnaround.

The quick turnaround is available for certain faculty and staff accounts only: Email Exchange, NetWare (share-file storage space), and VMS accounts. It is not for student or student-based accounts (SIS, FRS, LMS, etc.), said Scott Swartzentruber, director of networking. The two-day turnaround is effective from the supervisor's approval of the new account.

In order for a new staff or faculty person to obtain an e-mail account, they or their direct supervisor must fill and sign a Web form requesting the account (form coming soon to the IT Web site, its.wcu.edu). The form will collect pertinent account information and may be completed even before the new person arrives on campus.

The supervisor must then complete a secondary approval form (also Web-based). They will receive email notification regarding this form before the account may be created. This would also be a good time for the new person and supervisor to discuss any other systems to which they will need access.

The form to request access to the administrative systems on campus can be found at the following URL: <http://www.wcu.edu/registrar/Forms/AdminUserReq.pdf>

For more information, contact Scott Swartzentruber at scotts@email.wcu.edu or the ITS Help Desk at 227-7487.

Task Force To Ensure Web Access

The World Wide Web has become a major source of information for our faculty, staff, and students. Western is working to provide reasonable accommodations to ensure that students with disabilities may access this Web-based source of information.

The university recently adopted a Web Accessibility Policy which establishes standards for Web-based information and services. To both promote and support these efforts Western's IT Division is forming an Accessibility Task Force to suggest best practices for creating accessible Web content.

The Web Accessibility Policy, which is available at <http://www.wcu.edu/chancellor/index/universitypolicy/policy86.htm>, reinforces Western's commitment to providing equal access to Web-based information in its programs and services in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

All official university Web pages associ-

ated with university administration, services, courses of instruction, programs, and activities must conform to the Web accessibility standards and requirements. But, according to Bob Orr, director of Web management, Web design best practices suggest that Web pages should be designed to be usable by all people.

"Publishing Web content and developing Web-based services can be a lot of work," said Orr. "Why would we want to put something on a Web page that keeps people from fully using what we have created, especially considering that meeting accessibility requirements isn't necessarily difficult?" Orr suggests that good Web design should accommodate different browsers or screen readers for those who can't use a mouse or detect color.

The Office of Web Management will be leading this accessibility effort. For more information, contact Orr at orr@email.wcu.edu or call 227-7327.

Safe Access To Keep Residential Student Computers Clean

To help protect all campus computers, IT announces the implementation of Safe Access, a network device that allows residential students' computers to be automatically and regularly tested to make sure all required antivirus and protective software is present.

Preventative, protective, and time saving, Safe Access will test for Windows updates and complete packages as well as for software that

keeps machines free from a number of known damaging viruses. Western will then be able to quarantine machines that have problems, thus preventing further problems for the entire campus network.

Not only does Safe Access scan machines, but it also offers self help in remedying problems, offering links to missing software for

Student E-mails To See Change

Changes in the student e-mail system this fall will have some direct implications for faculty.

Efforts are underway to adopt e-mail as an official form of university-student correspondence.

Faculty are encouraged to begin using the university-supplied e-mail account for course correspondence and students are asked to check or forward their university-supplied account.

In other developments, student mass messaging through CyberCat Pipeline has been moved to the Office of Student Affairs from the Office of the CIO and application development in IT has created new groupings of students so messages can be better targeted to freshmen, undergraduate, graduate, and, of course, to all students.

Robert Caruso, vice chancellor for student affairs, and Tom Franke, chief information officer, created a student messaging committee to study issues related to student messaging.

Storage for individual student e-mail and Web page accounts has been greatly expanded for fall so users will be able to store more files without running out of space. IT Network Operations staff have installed new hard drives to e-mail hardware resulting in the tripling of e-mail and Web page storage for students.

Student e-mail passwords will now enable access for the entire semester. Students will be required to change their passwords following the start of the spring semester.

For information on mass e-mailings or student messaging, contact Donna Welch in the Office of Student Affairs at 227-7234 or e-mail dwelch@email.wcu.edu. For information on the new e-mail system development, contact Scott Swartzentruber, network operations, at 227-7487 or e-mail scotts@email.wcu.edu.