

**Academic Policy Committee  
University of Windsor**

5.3: **Information Technology Services Annual Report**

Item for: **Information**

Forwarded by: **Mr. Bala Kathiresan, Executive Director, Information Technology Services**

*See attached.*

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT TO THE ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### A. INTRODUCTION

The Information Technology Services department provides critical technology services directly and in partnership with academic and administrative departments to our faculty, staff and students. While some of our services are readily evident to our user community such as campus-wide high-speed wireless network, internet connectivity, others are less evident as they are executed with quiet efficiency behind the scene. The behind the scene services include spam filters that keep the Email system secure from harmful messages getting through, and our firewall preventing unauthorized access to our network.

#### B. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE REPORTING YEAR

1. **Provide an exceptional undergraduate experience:**
  - a. Collaboration and Learning Environment (CLEW) Upgrade
  - b. Student Information System enhancements
  - c. Enhancements to Institutional Quality Assurance Process Reporting
  - d. myUWindsor mobile upgrade
2. **Pursue strengths in research and graduate education:**
  - a. FluidSurveys Training to researchers and faculty
3. **Recruit and retain the best faculty and staff:**
  - a. Personalized Email address
4. **Engage and build the Windsor and Essex County community through partnerships:**
  - a. \$1.6 M Ministry of Research and Innovation funded broadband network expansion
  - b. Integration of IBM enterprise software application into Telus HealthSpace
5. **Promote international engagement:**
  - a. Website Content Management System (Drupal) Upgrade

#### C. SUCCESSES

- Implementing a significant number of infrastructure and system upgrades and enhancements while continuing to maintain system availability

#### D. CHALLENGES

- Islands of excellence that could be better leveraged to achieve optimization at the institutional level
- Current state of our major systems: Student Information System, Financial Information System and Learning Management System.

## REPORT

In many respects, 2013 has been a transformational year for the Information Technology Services (ITS) Department. Activities that continue to have the most effect include: the formation of the new Information Technology (IT) Steering Committee; creation of the annual IT Strategic Priority Fund; appointment of new individuals in ITS leadership positions; co-location of the Centre for Smart Community and Innovation (CSCI) with the ITS department; establishment of the ITS Project Management Office and the creation of the IT strategic direction. All these activities have helped to achieve a tighter alignment of IT Services' vision and mission with the University's mission, vision and values.

While all these transformations have brought about significant change, each and every one of our dedicated and professional staff continue to be unwavering in their focus and commitment to delivering exceptional services to the students, staff and faculty. As we endeavor to address the major system focused challenges and opportunities before us, we will continue to help shape the future of the University in its digital evolution.

### **A. AREA'S GOALS AND OBJECTIVES AND THE UNIVERSITY'S STRATEGIC PLAN**

#### **Provide an exceptional undergraduate experience:**

Working collaboratively with many departments in the University, we successfully implemented many technology solutions that improve our student experience. These changes apply to both undergraduate and graduate students. Some of the examples are:

#### **Collaboration and Learning Environment Windsor (CLEW) System Upgrade:**

We successfully upgraded the CLEW learning management system (LMS) from version 2.7.1 to 2.9. This gave our LMS users a number of new features including:

- a more modern accessibility compliant user-interface;
- features that help students to personalize their experience such as profiles, social media integration including ability to add Facebook or Twitter accounts as well as ability to Email broadly.
- Quizzing and Testing assessment tool for CLEW that would allow Instructors to create their own quizzes or import test bank data into CLEW. This provided a way for Instructors to hold assessments for their entire class without requiring students to purchase a membership at an external testing site (i. e., Pearson, McGraw-Hill etc.).

New CLEW server infrastructure was also successfully implemented to help reduce downtime, improve system performance. The new infrastructure will enable us to monitor hardware performance to ensure quality of service by proactively troubleshooting and addressing any potential performance degradation.

#### **Student Information System (SIS) Enhancements:**

A number of new features and enhancements were implemented in our SIS to improve functionality, as well as to ensure compliance with the provincially mandated and Senate directed changes, including:

- **Implementation of 100 Point Grade Scale**

This senate directed change has helped reduce confusion for students who may not be familiar with the 13 point scale, and eliminates any perceived disadvantage in transferring to other post-secondary institutions by allowing their transcripts to be more easily compared to those from other schools (a letter grade of A+ required a 93 at the University of Windsor as compared to a 90 at many other institutions). This change was a significant technical challenge to implement as the effect of this modification within the Student Information System was widespread. All student records were potentially impacted as result of a complete system

recalculation of all averages, making accuracy critical. Average and/or grade rules for academic action (e.g. probation), minors, business concentrations, graduation, program distinction, President's Honour Role, teachable requirements, degree audit, course pre-requisites, awards and seating restrictions were also affected.

- **Support for Business Concentrations**

This enhancement is an advantage to students by allowing them to graduate with an Honours degree in Business Administration (as opposed to a degree in a specific discipline) potentially making them more marketable after graduation. This change will allow the Odette School of Business to provide students with a special certificate to go along with their diploma. In addition, the school will be able to provide these students with priority access to courses within their area of specialization.

- **Support Custom Fees for Programs**

This enhancement supports different fee structures within the same program so that fees can be tailored to meet the needs of specific students. This is especially useful in supporting international students who may be required to take English language training or a preparatory program as part of their study requirement.

- **Support for Selection of Distance Education Exam Site at Time of Registration**

This enhancement allows students to specify where they will be writing their Distance Education exams when initially registering for courses. This eliminates the need to contact the Office of the Registrar at a later time to confirm the exam location. A change to the Assessment Process was also required as the University can no longer charge students who write these exams on campus.

### **Improvements to Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) Reporting**

The IQAP process describes procedures for developing, reviewing and approving new undergraduate and graduate program proposals and changes to existing programs. The existing IQAP reports were revised to include additional required data. The new format should greatly reduce the amount of manual work in Graduate Studies and reporting departments.

### **Drupal Upgrade**

Drupal upgrade was successfully implemented to enable us to achieve higher level of compliance with Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) as well as introduce a number of new key features such as support for on-line forms, improved graphic interface as well as content editing capabilities.

### **myUWindsor mobile**

Our on-line student portal – myUWindsor, provides many key functions such as Registration, Award Search, UWinCard, as well as a link to Campus news and information in an “all-in-one” easy to access place for students. These features are also offered in a mobile environment through myUWindsor mobile app providing access to these key functions at students’ fingertips anywhere and anytime.

In 2013, a new version of the myUWindsor Student Portal was rolled out powering the mobile course registration, giving us the distinction of being one of the first Canadian Universities to offer course registration in a mobile app.

This latest version of the myUWindsor Portal was developed utilizing a new portal technology tool that will enable us to deliver better performance, scalability as well as ability to add collaboration features.

Several new features that benefit and better engage today's "on the go" students were added to the myUWindsor mobile app in 2013. The mobile app will now keep our students well connected with push notifications from UWindsor messages and CLEW notifications from their course instructors. Other new additions include the ability to connect to the library and search the catalogue for books, videos, and journals. Using the app Students and Staff can now subscribe to the University's emergency notification system and view the latest news from the Lance.

**Pursue strengths in research and graduate experience:**

(Many of the technology solutions discussed in the above section apply to our researchers as well as to graduate students).

**FluidSurveys**

FluidSurveys, introduced to the campus community in 2012 continues to be a popular resource for faculty, researchers and administrators. We organized training for more than thirty Fluid Survey users to enable them to get the most out of this popular technology solution.

**Recruit and retain the best faculty and staff:**

Technological tools and solutions we offer enable us to attract, recruit and retain the best faculty and staff, and facilitate us becoming the university of choice. ITS endeavors to work collaboratively with staff and faculty in identifying and implementing technology solutions that are accessible from anywhere at anytime.

***Personalized Email Address:***

We launched this new feature to enhance the security of our system as well as give our staff and faculty the ability to personalize their Email address.

**Engage and build the Windsor and Essex County community through partnerships:**

The ITS department, through the efforts of Centre for Smart Community Innovation, is committed to fostering community partnerships and collaboration that promotes health and well-being of the residents and strengthen the economy of Windsor-Essex region.

CSCI has provided significant campus outreach in support of broadband connectivity in the Windsor-Essex region in 2012-13, by completing the \$1.6 M upgrade through Ministry of Research and Innovation (MRI) Rural Connections Broadband Grants for next generation wireless Internet access in Lakeshore, Kingsville and Amherstburg.

The Windsor-Essex region, as a result of activities involving CSCI, is now approximately 98% serviced in accordance with Ontario high-speed Internet access guidelines. With its intelligent community development research, CSCI continues to investigate innovation potential in the global market involving the 117 intelligent communities recognized by the Intelligent Community Forum, an academic think tank in the United States, as well as with their Canadian affiliate, iCanada.

CSCI activities have integrated computer applications for use in healthcare research resulting in refereed publications. CSCI also provided the first integration

of an IBM enterprise software application into Telus HealthSpace in 2012, for use in CHI projects using mobile devices through 2015.

CSCI, through its WEDnet™ activities, has acquired a Google Edge Presence environment through which the University houses a regional access point to the capabilities of Google. This is a global beacon for the campus internationally. Google resources accessible amongst those connected to WEDnet™ will reduce the Google traffic on the external Internet connection.

Cost-sharing continues to provide value with our regional partners on network services for access, hardware acquisition and support.

#### **World Childrens' Games**

Working collaboratively with the Conference Services department and the City of Windsor we implemented seamless wireless Internet access to the World Childrens' Games participants to ensure that they stayed connected as they travelled to various venues in Windsor.

### **CHALLENGES**

ITS service requirements have grown organically over the last several years responding effectively to the ever growing technological and applications' needs of the University by custom developing and implementing solutions. In the process, these innovations have resulted in many islands of excellence that could be better leveraged to achieve optimization at the institutional level.

However, we are faced with the following major system issues concurrently:

- **Student Information System:** Rewrite from Forte to Java, at the current pace, will take about 15 person years to provide existing functionality;
- **Financial Information System:** Became unsupported as of December 31, 2013. Our existing version is several releases behind and would take approximately \$1.7 million to become current; and
- **Learning Management System:** Nearing end-of-life.

To ensure that these major system issues evolve into opportunities to help us leap frog and achieve a higher level of automation in our processes and achieve efficiency, we need to shift our approach with respect to information technology including:

- stop in-house development of core systems; and
- form and effectively utilize internal and external strategic partnerships.

With the support of our dedicated and professional staff we are confident that we will continue to not only address these challenging opportunities, but adapt to the new realities and deliver excellent service.

### **B. FUTURE ACTIONS/INITIATIVES**

- Support the Enterprise Resource Planning selection and implementation process; and
- Develop and implement infrastructure renewal plan.

### **C. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SENATE CONSIDERATION**

- Continue to support the adoption of new technology tools and solutions.