CIO Updates - 06/2018

Office of Information Technology

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CIO Updates June 2018

Posted by Tom Wolf on June 1, 2018

This is my favorite time of the year! Not only is it hot outside but the heat is also being turned up indoors as the various Office of Information Technology (OIT) teams work feverishly to prepare for the 2018-19 academic school year. In honor of these hard working IT professionals I would like to take this opportunity to describe for you the various units that comprise the Office of Information Technology and touch briefly on some of the exciting projects they are planning for the 2018-19 academic school year.

OVERVIEW

The Office of Information Technology (OIT) was created in 1991 when the former Academic Computing Services, Administrative Computing Services and Telecommunications departments were merged into one division and moved into the then newly completed University Computing Center. Today’s OIT is home to 97 full time IT professionals. OIT also employs approximately 200 students and 3 student interns over the course of a typical academic school year. The Office of Information Technology’s service portfolio, strategic planning documents, rules, policies, procedures, staff directory, monthly technology updates and much more can be found online at www.wmich.edu/it/. At its core OIT’s mission is to support the teaching, learning, research and public service missions of Western Michigan University through excellence in design, development, application, implementation, management and support of information technology. So that’s a quick look at the OIT as a whole. I would now like to talk about the people and teams as they are the heart and soul of the Office of Information Technology.

OIT SERVICE TEAMS

The Office of Information Technology is organized into eleven distinct “teams” that provide a wide variety of technology services to Western Michigan University’s campus community.

Support Services

Support Services is an extremely diverse OIT team serving a wide array of clients. For starters Support Services maintains a uniform set of classroom technologies across almost 200 WMU classrooms and 50 WMU conference rooms. The Faculty Technology Center (FTC) is also part of Support Services and provides hands on assistance to faculty covering a wide variety of technology topics with Elearning support being their primary focus. The main IT Help Desk on campus is part of Support Services and provides phone, web (chat) and walk-in support. The IT Help Desk staff also support a Mobile Help Desk that periodically roams the campus living spaces providing on location IT Help Desk services. The University Switchboard (the 7-1000 number) is another Support Services charge as are the two largest computer labs on campus, the University Computing Center Lab and the Bernhard Center Computer Lab. Wireless and 3D printing are functions that are maintained by Support Services. Support Services also provides desktop, laptop, iPad, and phone support to over 350 employees on campus including the
President and the WMU Board of Trustees. In support of the 2018-19 academic school year Support Services will be upgrading projectors to laser technology in 45 classrooms. Support Services will also be playing a key role in the September rollout of the new eSports arena. If you haven’t already, please stop by the University Computing Center and check out the new eSports gaming stations. Over the summer the walk in IT Help desk moved into the University Computing Center Lab so be sure to stop by and check out WMU’s version of the genius bar concept. And don’t forget to grab some technology swag at the Support Services run Bronco Bash table this fall!

Communication and Collaboration

Communication and collaboration are essential characteristics of any successful business and WMU is no exception which is why the Communication and Collaboration team takes a lot of pride in delivering a variety of communication and collaboration technologies to the campus community. At the core of their mission is WMU’s long standing telecommunications services which include telephones, the campus voicemail system and a variety of web and voice conferencing solutions. The team also supports the campus online Elearning system (Brightspace by D2L) and the highly used Microsoft Office 365 based W-Exchange email and calendaring collaboration suite. The W-Exchange Teams module was released to the campus in May and should see extensive use this fall. The group is currently working to replace its three decades old voicemail system with the feature rich CISCO Unity voicemail system. One nice feature of the CISCO Unity voicemail system is that it integrates seamlessly with W-Exchange. The Communication and Collaboration team has also begun plans to replace WMU’s two Adobe Connect seminar rooms with a virtually unlimited number of CISCO based Webex on-demand collaboration, online meeting, web conferencing and videoconferencing applications.

Security and Privacy

The Office of Information Technology Security and Privacy team was created three years ago to address two decades of exponential growth in cybercrime. This group is responsible for WMU’s primary identifier, the Bronco NetID. They are also campus advocates for Securing the Human (SANS) training. They administer monthly security scans of all registered campus servers. The Security and Privacy team facilitates regular penetration tests against the campus technology infrastructure. This team also manages endpoint protection for all campus owned computers and resolves music and video sharing violations. This team is proactively working on a number of fronts to better secure the campus technology environment in 2018-19. Two factor authentication is adding an additional layer of security to several mission critical services. The current 20 year old legacy Bronco NetID provisioning/deprovisioning system will soon be replaced by Microsoft’s Identity Manager (MIM) service. Options for intercepting phishing attempts will also be investigated in 2018-19.

Educational Technology Services

Educational Technology Services, formerly called Media Services, generates between 180 and 200 video productions a year including the long running (20 seasons) Bronco Review television series. Script writing along with studio and on location shooting are staples for this team.
also manage WMU’s MyMediasite lecture capture solution, perform DVD and VHS video copying/conversion, and manage of WMU’s primary video storage solution Mediasite. They are also responsible for the distribution of EDUCABLE, WMU’s 120 channel (74 of which are in high definition) traditional cable television solution. This team also works closely with the College of Fine Arts (CFA) to incorporate some amazing technology into a wide variety of CFA productions. In January of this year Educational Technology Services teamed with the Waldo Library IT professionals to open a highly successful Virtual Reality Lab space in the basement of Waldo Library. Educational Technology Services leveraged presidential transformational funding this spring to stand up a new lecture capture solution called Learning Glass that has already received high praise from a number of faculty. Virtual reality, drone photography, motion capture, 3D animation, and augmented reality are also part of the Educational Technology Services portfolio. The director for this group retired in April of 2018. In support of the 2018-19 academic school year the Educational Technology Services team will be merging into the Support Services team to form an as yet unbranded faculty one stop service concept. Also planned for 2018-19 will be a new mobile television and DVR service uniquely available to WMU’s on campus residents.

Research and Innovation Support

As part of OIT’s formal support of the Gold Standard 2020 strategic plan OIT has created a small two person team focused on the technology based research and innovation needs of WMU’s campus community. Contract support, product reviews and assistance with grant writing are services provided by this team. This team also works closely with the University Computing Center based student run interdisciplinary Makerspace. In support of WMU’s academic mission this team recently received presidential transformational funding to create an academically focused virtual reality development studio. Plans for 2018-19 include expansion of the Makerspace to a much larger space in Waldo Library, fostering Makerspace related business incubator opportunities and continuing to expand OIT’s technology support for WMU’s research community.

Project Management Office (PMO)

The PMO was formed in 2014 to help lead internal OIT projects. In three short years campus wide demand for project management as a service has increased tremendously. As a result the PMO is now available (resources permitting) to provide project management to any and all members of the campus community. Last year the PMO successfully deployed throughout the Office of Information Technology a new service management system branded ITDirect. This coming year the Project Management Office is planning to expand ITDirect usage outside of OIT in support of a number of technology partner on campus who have expressed an interest in leveraging the features of ITDirect. Over the course of the coming academic school year the PMO is planning to expand the ITDirect service management system to include project management, service management and change management functions.
Enterprise Administrative Applications

Who likes to get paid? Well campus payroll is one of the many charges of the Administrative Applications team. Their primary responsibility is to maintain and enhance WMU’s human resources, payroll, and financials applications and they are very very good at what they do. Federal and state regulations for these environments are always changing and it is the responsibility of this team to support these changes. Enhancing the self service functions of these products will be a 2018-19 focus for this team.

Enterprise Academic Applications

The Academic Applications team supports WMU’s student information system and related applications including Financial Aid, the GOWMU portal and the recently purchased Salesforce recruitment and retention system. During the 2018-19 academic school year the Academic Applications team will be working with Admissions and Alumni/Development to implement a variety of new Salesforce based software services. The student information system will also be undergoing a significant upgrade in 2018-19.

Database Administration

The database administrators in the Office of Information Technology are responsible for the care and feeding of over 200 application databases. WMU has Oracle and Microsoft site licenses so the Database Administration team regularly provides database administration in a variety of flavors to just about anyone on campus who has a database need. Disaster recovery testing is high on the list of priorities for the Database Administration team in 2018-19.

Infrastructure Services

Infrastructure Services serves as the backbone for just about every technology on campus. This unit is divided into four distinct teams: Production Operations, Systems, Network Support Services, and Network Architecture. The Production Operations team maintains WMU’s primary machine room which is home to over 1,000 physical and virtual machines. Over 6,000 objects are monitored with 3,400,000 sensor scans per day under this team’s 24/7 support model. 325,000+ mark sense sheets are scanned every year. Infrastructure Services maintains all aspects of WMU’s wired and wireless network including almost 1,500 routers and switches, the network core, and a wide variety of network firewalls. If you could look under the covers of WMU’s wired and wireless network you would find 20 miles of underground ductwork, 60 miles of underground trunk fiber, 1,700 miles of copper wire, 68,000 wired ports, and 3,000 wireless access points to go with nearly 100 network specific servers. It has only been about ten years since Apple first released the iPhone yet in those short ten years smartphones have completely changed the way we live, work, and play. Our dependence on WiFi connectivity continues to grow significantly every year. By 2020 there are expected to be 21 “billion” Internet of Things (IoT) devices in use worldwide and roughly 6 billion smartphones. So it shouldn’t come as any surprise that the top priority for the Infrastructure Services team in 2018-19 is to meet and/or exceed the campus expectations for safe and secure wired and wireless connectivity.
Information Technology Business Office

I would be remiss not to mention OIT’s small but effective Information Technology Business Office team (ITBO). ITBO is tasked with maintaining accurate student and staff payroll data, working closely with Human Resources to maintain all student and staff employment data, managing OIT’s diverse multi-fund budgets, financial tracking all OIT assets, liabilities, revenues and expenses, and keeping track of the volumes of paperwork associated with the over 200 OIT managed software contracts.

In closing my June 2018 CIO Report I would like to mention that this month three long time Office of Information Technology employees announced their plans to retire. Marketing Specialist Nancy Kroes is leaving WMU after 32 years as an IT professional. Executive assistant, payroll specialist and student employee coordinator Delores “Dee” Minshall, who started her career at WMU in 1988, announced her plans to retire the end of July. Tennis standout and long time Network Administrator Allan “Al” Poole joined the Office of Information Technology in 1989 and is planning to retire in August. Let me extend a heartfelt thank you to all three of these long standing IT professionals for their nine decades (combined) of outstanding service to the WMU community. You will all be missed!

If you have any questions or comments I would love to hear from you at (269) 387-3838 or tom.wolf@wmich.edu. Go Broncos!