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**University of Guelph IT Management  
Response Report  
To the  
Information Technology  
Student Advisory Committee (ITSAC)  
Annual Report  
2007 - 2008**

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### III. Library IT Survey

No response given.

### IV. Email (Zimbra)

- 1) **Recommendation:** *ITSAC recommends that the Zimbra team migrate the email forwarding options for those who have set them, so they do not have to.*

**CCS Response:** Email forwarding options were preserved for accounts migrated from the old mail system to Gryph Mail.

- 2) **Recommendation:** *The committee suggests the continuation of the support of non-web mechanisms for accessing email such as POP3, IMAP and SMTP.*

**CCS Response:** Although CCS has no plans for discontinuing the support for thick client access to Gryph Mail through the use of protocols such as POP, IMAP and SMTP, the significant benefits of Gryph Mail's web interface will not be realized by users of thick clients.

- 3) **Recommendation:** *ITSAC recommends that the Zimbra team publicize the ability to send mail using [outbound.mail.uoguelph.ca](mailto:outbound.mail.uoguelph.ca) from off campus (using SSL). This should be in the online email connection documentation.*

**CCS Response:** CCS is currently evaluating how best to support the use of thick clients from off campus. Service enhancements such as the use of mail delivery over secure connections are being considered as part of this evaluation and the appropriate documentation will be provided on our website.

- 4) **Recommendation:** *ITSAC recommends increasing the current attachment size limit. The committee members felt that it is common to be sending files many times larger than the current size limit.*

**CCS Response:** With the introduction of Gryph Mail CCS has increased the maximum attachment size from 5 megabytes to 20 megabytes.

- 5) **Recommendation:** *Furthermore, ITSAC suggests that a plan be put in place for the new email system to remain on par with other email solutions as functionality, speed etc. increase.*

**CCS Response:** CCS is committed to enhancing Gryph Mail's effectiveness as a productivity and collaboration tool, and to ensure that performance is maintained at optimum levels for all users of the system.

## V. Calendaring (Zimbra)

- 1) **Recommendation:** *ITSAC recommends that the University offer a unified calendaring solution to link WebCT, Zimbra, Portal and Class schedules. A single calendar for all student needs would be easier to use than multiple calendars in multiple systems.*

**CCS Response:** The integration and centralization of calendar information into Gryph Mail calendars that are published to students is being investigated by each of the specific content providers, such as the Registrar's Office for class schedules. CCS will work with these content providers to ensure Gryph Mail's capabilities are utilized effectively.

- 2) **Recommendation:** *ITSAC recommends that the student calendar information not be made public by default; that students retain full control of who can access their calendar information.*

**CCS Response:** Calendar detail in Gryph Mail is not published by default, it must be explicitly shared with other users. Only Free/Busy time is published. For more information see the Calendaring Best Practices pages on the CCS website.

- 3) **Recommendation:** *It would also be beneficial for education to be provided to students on the risks of making some types of scheduling information publicly available. The committee also recommends calendaring training or workshops be offered for students.*

**CCS Response:** CCS will take this recommendation under consideration. There are currently on-line training videos available under Getting Started in the Email and Calendaring section of the CCS web site.

## VI. MyPortico

### Conclusions and Recommendations

- *Continue improving standards compliance. In today's diverse world of browsers adhering to standards is essential to producing a product that can be used by those it is intended for.*
- *Support the back button. Although provisions are in place to move back on the page by clicking links, these are not easy to learn and eliminate the use of keyboard shortcuts, mouse buttons or mouse gestures to navigate back. If the back button cannot be supported then add true breadcrumbs so that users can find their way back.*
- *Continue to improve tabbed browsing support. Tabbed browsing is rapidly becoming an expected ability in websites. Limitations on tabbed browsing will hinder adoption.*

- *Eliminate the use of pop-ups entirely. Pop-ups are disorienting and interrupt the workflow. For MyPortico to present a coherent interface, it must not separate its functionality into different “applications” with pop-ups.*
- *Remove unnecessary steps in performing common tasks. For example: when clicking on the link to one’s WebCT course the page for that course should load, not a second list of courses in WebCT.*
- *Place hair-line boxes around each item in MyPortico to separate the applications on each page. It was suggested that some demarcation of separate page items would make MyPortico more readable. Gerrit responded that this had been considered by the MyPortico team, but discarded when the team felt it actually decreased readability of the page. ITSAC discussed this at some length, and reviewed other similar portal sites, and ultimately decided that they still recommended placing boxes around separate items.*

**CCS Response:**

CCS will be conducting a review of MyPortico early in the fall semester. As part of this process, consideration will be given to how a campus portal should integrate into campus web applications, as well as the role of collaborative tools available in Gryph Mail. CCS will continue to engage ITSAC on this key service area for input and guidance.

## VII. Network Access Control and Wireless

**1) Recommendations:**

- *There is a small reduction in battery life while running the Clean Access Agent. With the limited access to power outlets in many lecture halls this can be a major inconvenience.*
- *The ITSAC committee recommends that the Wireless team watch for improvements in the technology to decrease power demands.*

**CCS Response:**

CCS works closely with the vendor of our Network Access Control system to ensure that available updates and enhancements are incorporated as they become available and are tested.

**2) Recommendations:**

- *Some versions of windows are unable to gain full access. Windows 98/ME computers and Windows CE devices are required to run the NAC client, but there is none available for their version. The possibility of a Windows CE fix in new versions was mentioned.*
- *If possible, add versions of Windows without NAC Clients available to the exception list.*

**CCS Response:**

CCS will take this recommendation under consideration. Note that the vast majority of client computers connecting to our wireless network are supported devices.

**3) Recommendation:** *Some virus software is excluded.*

**CCS Response:** The Clean Access software recognizes a comprehensive list of anti-virus software packages. We regularly update our systems throughout the year to maximize compatibility with client software. If issues are experienced CCS recommends the use of our supported anti-virus software, McAfee, which is available for free to all students from the CCS software download site.

**4) Recommendation:** *The committee recommends clarification of the process to access limited web access.*

**CCS Response:** CCS has updated our web site documentation to provide clarity on the process to obtain limited or restricted access.

**5) Recommendation:** *Continue to provide wireless access to non-windows systems.*

**CCS Response:** CCS will continue to provide wireless access to systems which use supported technologies and protocols as outlined on the Wireless pages of our web site.

## VIII. Technology In Learning

No response given.

## IX. University of Guelph Website

No response given.

## X. Single Sign-On

### Conclusions and Recommendations:

Several ITSAC members were interested in making it persistent, that a user could stay logged in on their own computer. Zdenek replied it was not likely, as the security

implications are pretty high. Dave (Student Senate Caucus) recommended a 'remember me' feature with very clear documentation of what the risks are. Several members pointed out that other non-university sites do have this function.

**Response:**

CCS has agreed that they will investigate this desire in 2009. Priority for 2008 will be the integration with client websites.

## **XI. Adaptive Software**

The LCSD will continue to work with CCS to look for ways of improving access to, and reducing the purchasing costs of, adaptive software for students and staff by exploring internal licensing arrangements and looking for external consortial purchasing opportunities.

Measures will be taken to continue promoting accessibility auditing and awareness with respect to the web environment, as well as accessibility policies for labs, classrooms and the virtual web. We are currently endeavouring to increase campus awareness of information and communication accessibility issues through initiatives such as an accessibility conference that has been tentatively scheduled for the spring of 2009. The need to address these issues is heightened by impending provincial standards on information and communication that are being developed under the aegis of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

## **XII. IT Environment on Campus**

### **Labs on Campus**

There are a total of nine labs on campus, however a complete list is not available to students.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations:**

- The ITSAC committee recommends that a policy be created by ITSIG for the standardization of all labs on campus.
- Signage should be clearly posted by labs so students will know which labs are accessible, and when they are available.
- A list of labs and their respective available software should be available on a webpage so students know which labs have what software, who is allowed to use those labs and when they are available.
- ITSAC members requested more plants in labs (if possible) as a décor to create a better working environment for students.
- ITSAC recommends that second-hand chairs also be required to meet the mandated standard for lab chairs. Students have commented that there is a requirement for what kinds of chairs can be in labs, but second-hand chairs are not required to meet this standard. This has resulted in some very low quality plastic chairs in some labs.

**Response:**

I'd like to express my appreciation for the recommendations ITSAC have compiled with regards to Labs on Campus. After reviewing the report I met with Jeff Walker the Manager of IT, Library. The Library operates the largest student lab on campus along with some of the labs in CPES and CBS. We agreed that the ITSAC recommendations would be beneficial; however we also recognize there are significant challenges implementing the recommendations as each of the labs are funded, designed, implemented and run independently of each other. We will prepare a report for the [Information Services Council](#) which will support the ITSAC recommendations and will outline strategies on how they could be achieved. The Manager of IT, Library and I, Manager, Computing and Communications Services will commit to producing this report, have it delivered to the ISC and report back to ITSAC over the fall semester.

### **XIII. WebCT/Blackboard**

No response given.

### **XIV. WebAdvisor**

#### **Conclusions and Recommendations:**

ITSAC particularly appreciated learning about the impact that ITSAC recommendations have had on the WebAdvisor system in the past. The committee also recognized that the UofG WebAdvisor, and in particular the mark distribution timeline, are excellent compared to what is available at other schools.

- ITSAC recommends that a possible solution to the peak usage problem seen during the times when marks are distributed is to create a system that e-mails students marks out. The committee recognizes that confidentiality of personal information is an issue associated with e-mail and would need to be addressed. The University would need to make sure that student marks couldn't be accessed from their e-mail by anyone that wasn't supposed to have access, which could be a potential problem.

#### **Response:**

**The Registrar will respond to this suggestion in October.**

- The committee recommends that the Registrar implement staggered access for mark distribution. This system could be based on either student number or course level, possibly both, and students would be granted access to their marks in certain windows of time. With this solution comes the potential problem of students needing their marks earlier for things like grad school or scholarships. As a way to alleviate this problem, there could be a system for students to register to receive access to their marks before their designated window. Students may not be receptive at first to this new system because, for some, it will mean an increased waiting time before they receive their marks.

#### **Response:**

**The Registrar will respond to this suggestion in October.**

- Alternatively, extracting marks from WebAdvisor and putting them behind a login on a secure site would decrease the load on WebAdvisor.

#### **Response:**

**The Registrar will respond to this suggestion in October.**

- ITSAC recommends increased communication to the student body about the WebAdvisor product and the mark distribution system. The Registrar operates under restrictions of the product and of the license and does not have free reign to change the system. While there may be some shortcomings of our WebAdvisor system,



students at the University of Guelph need to be made aware of the fact that this system is better than most and that they receive their marks much earlier than most other universities.

**Response:**

**The Registrar will respond to this in October.**

## **XV. SPAM**

What we can conclude from this is that the implementation of the Zimbra email system and its filters will be useful in solving the problems for students still receiving junk to their inbox, and that by hardening the edge of the message environment it will be resolving the issue of too heavy a load on the system.

- **Recommendation:** *ITSAC recommends that there be more information dissemination to students regarding how SPAM is handled and the amount that is deflected. Students who are aware of how much SPAM is processed out by the system might be more patient in dealing with the SPAM that gets through to their email.*

**Response:**

CCS will make information on our email anti-spam and anti-virus strategies and their effectiveness available on our web site during the Fall semester.

## **XVI. Other issues**

- *Request for more Windows Vista compatible software/websites/documentation.*

**CCS Response:** Documentation regarding the use of Vista at the University of Guelph is available here:

[http://www.uoguelph.ca/ccs/software/supported\\_products/microsoft2007/microsoft\\_vista.shtml](http://www.uoguelph.ca/ccs/software/supported_products/microsoft2007/microsoft_vista.shtml) If this documentation is not sufficient we would be more than happy to attend one of the ITSAC meetings in the fall semester to engage in conversation and to have a better understanding of this request.

- *Students have trouble determining how to unlock their accounts when they first arrive on campus. The lock also causes problems for student groups trying to reach their students in the first weeks of school.*

**CCS Response:** With Zimbra we no longer utilize a mechanism to lock email - so this should now be a non-issue for students.

- *Mismatch between University computers which have Office 2007 and courses that are only Office 2003 compliant.*

**Response:** When MS Office 2007 was introduced CCS published recommendations regarding which MS Office file formats to use. The recommendations can be found here:

[http://www.uoguelph.ca/ccs/software/supported\\_products/microsoft2007/microsoft\\_office\\_2007.shtml](http://www.uoguelph.ca/ccs/software/supported_products/microsoft2007/microsoft_office_2007.shtml)

It is likely that not all departments have adopted these recommendations. I will ensure the recommendations are reviewed and updated if necessary and follow up with a memo to the IT administrators across campus to ensure they are aware of our recommendations and ITSAC's concerns.

- *A request was put forward to use the Software Distribution Site (SDS) as a repository for Linux; this would be convenient for students, save net traffic, and provide advertising for UofG.*

**Response:** Academic Support runs the Software distribution Service. They would be happy to include Linux in the list of software they distribute. To make this happen Academic Support will need a UoG entity to represent the Linux user community. This entity could be a department or committee or even an individual who is willing to take on some responsibilities. They would determine which flavour(s) of Linux should be distributed, they'll need to provide a copy of the media (in ISO format or CD/DVD) and they will need to notify Academic Support when updates are required and provide the media for those updates. They'll also need to identify who can provide user support for installation and configuration issues.

- *Request to ensure that there is an ITSAC meeting with the Registrar - that WebAdvisor is a key topic and the students want a venue to be heard. They don't know where to take their feedback to.*

**Response:** The Registrar will respond to this in October.