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Information Technology  
Student Advisory Committee  
(ITSAC)

Annual Report

2011-2012

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## **I. Introduction**

The Information Technology Student Advisory Committee (ITSAC) serves as an advisory committee for Information Technology (IT) on campus on matters dealing with IT programs and services for students.

This is now the second year following a new format for the administration of the committee. ITSAC has a Chair and a Vice-chair, each serving a two year commitment to ITSAC, this year's Chair was sitting on the committee for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in a row (since serving as the Vice-Chair for last year).

A number of guest speakers were invited to attend the meeting to discuss IT related programs and services, soliciting feedback on their existing and proposed services. In line with the recommendations from last year's report both WebAdvisor and the Library student survey were discussed this year.

Overall, ITSAC had a very successful year and discussed a wide variety of topics. The resulting report outlines the feedback and recommendations based on the committee's work.

## II. Membership

### IT Student Advisory Committee: Membership Information – 2010-2011

**Angela Spenceley**

Analyst, Computing and Communications Services  
(CCS) -Chair

**Randy Oldham**

Library ITS

**Ruth Smith**

Cluster Lead, Computing and Communications  
Services (CCS)- Vice-Chair

**Dhiren Audich**

Central Student Association (CSA)

**Dhiren Audich**

Student Senate Caucus (SSC)

**Renato Pardo**

College of Physical & Engineering Science Student  
Council (CPESSC)

**No representative**

College of Biological Science Student Council  
(CBSSC)

**Ashley Knapton**

Students Federation of the Ontario Agricultural  
College (SFOAC)

**Bhreagha (Inez)Campbell**

College of Social and Applied Human Sciences –  
Student Alliance (CSAHS-SA)

**Rosilda Xavier**

College of Management and Economics (CME)

**Rosilda Xavier**

Interhall Council

**Han Shen**

College of Arts Student Union (CASU)

**Jessica Watkin**

Centre for Students with Disabilities (CSD)

**Alex Laffoley/Eddie Ma**

Grad Student Association (GSA)

**Matt Kornya**

Central Veterinary Students' Association

**No rep**

Guelph-Humber Student Association

**Matt Kornya**

CCS – Help Centre and IT Help Desk

Rotating representation

ITSIG

### III. Gryph Mail

Saveena Patara from Computing and Communication Services attended to review Gryph Mail and its additional features beyond mail available to students. The majority of students were not aware of the collaboration tools available, and used only the e-mail feature. An overview of features and how to use them included mail filters, syncing with smartphones, restoring deleted mail and extensions known as Zimlets.

Past years' feedback included importing the student calendar into GryphMail. This was attempted by the Communications and Collaboration team, however, failed due to a software bug.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. The calendar feature would be used if it contained course due dates from CourseLink.
2. Students would like to see an Instant Message feature. They would use it for group work and during lectures, e.g. "do you understand slide 5 or should I ask a question?"
3. Make Gryph mail more accessible, clients at the Centre for Students with Disabilities have trouble using Gryph mail.
4. Encourage faculty participation, if professors posted course related dates in the Gryph calendar students would use it.
5. Students often use other calendars and the import/export features of Gryph calendar are lacking.
6. Once Zimbra software is upgraded, attempt to import the Student Calendar again.

### IV. Wireless, ResNet and Network Access Control (NAC)

This was a broad topic also covered last year. We focused on explaining wireless access with particular emphasis on security implications of the choice of access type.

Dennis Xu presented the wireless networking on campus. Dennis explained in detail the different types of wireless access available:

1. UofG WiFi Secure
2. UofG WiFi
3. Eduroam

#### **What is NAC? Network Access Control**

In order to connect to the secure WiFi, the device used for connection must pass a security "test" which is the NAC.

This application assigns different users different network access based on who and where they are as well as what is discovered about the device.

You could end up with limited access if you have issues on the device, such as windows updates required, or out of date antivirus definitions. Once the issues are addressed you get full network access. While you are addressing the issues, you can still get limited or restricted access to certain resources required to address the issue, like Microsoft and virus update sites.

### **Wireless Expansion to Johnson Hall Residence**

Dennis explained that this was a pilot project implemented in summer 2011. The networks in place are UoG-Resnet-secure and Eduroam.

For now the same policies apply as with the other wireless networks on campus. CCS may need to change these policies to meet residence needs, i.e. allow wireless printing (on campus this has been blocked). Students generally expressed a want and need for wireless access in all residences. There was discussion around when wireless will be rolled out to other residences, however firm plans are not yet in place until Networking assesses the results of the pilot.

### **Feedback:**

There were a number of questions posed by the committee members highlighting some concerns and user level experience with wireless networking and the NAC agent.

1. When a user device fails the NAC check, there is an option to hit a button to fix the problem, however, it rarely works. The experience is you must always resolve the non-compliance manually, but it's confusing to figure out how to resolve it.
2. Another question was why do we even have an insecure network? Dennis advised it takes time to transition from an easy method of gaining access to a secure method. Networking encourages people use the secure network at all times. Over time the insecure method will be phased out, but Networking has to be sensitive to the ease of use issue.
3. Another early semester major issue at the help desk is that passwords don't synchronize automatically. The LDAP password is not in Active Directory until you change your password, which syncs the two. Until you do this sync, you cannot get on Secure Wireless. This is a major issue early in the year with help desk calls and getting students to actually switch to Secure wireless. Since this is an initial barrier, students get the early impression that secure wireless is too much trouble. The question was "Why do you have to reset your password?" Dennis advised this is an Identity management issue and the way the system is currently architected.

**NOTE: Once we implement Oracle Identity Manager, sometime in summer 2012, this issue will be fixed.**

## Recommendations:

1. Provide simpler instructions for using Wireless Networking. Make the process easier to connect to the secure network, NAC and ensure process to authenticate and verify using NAC is more simple/seamless.
2. Ensure that new versions of anti-virus are supported by NAC as soon as updates are available.
3. Create awareness around differences, from a user perspective; of using secure vs. insecure wireless include associated risks, etc. Perhaps add information to the Single Sign-On page.
4. Provide an automated method of reporting to Networking when students are not able to connect to wireless? i.e. due to overload on access points, etc.
5. Students realize the challenges with providing Wi-Fi in some residence rooms (e.g. South), however Wi-Fi is important for group work in residence, so ensure that there is opportunity for group work in residence using wireless (shared quiet spaces?)

## V. Web Development

Craig Hyatt from Computing and Communications Services (CCS) presented on different tools students could use for Web Development.

Craig described the three main services provided by his team in CCS.

1. Web Hosting
2. Web Project Management
3. Web Development

The main focus of the presentation was related to the issues students face in managing Web sites. Web Hosting options include a number of varieties. There are the personal tilde accounts which consist of the personal web space everyone has access to at ~personal. This is basic html with none of the higher level tools like Flash. There are also organizational Web spaces for student organizations and clubs, with more flexibility. Despite this flexibility these sites are typically 5-6 years out of sync with current technology. Lastly there are Drupal Sites which are hosted on Virtual Machines. These Web Sites include a Content Management System or editor, and anyone can be designated to easily modify Web Site content. This most mature of the Web Hosting options is operated on a cost recovery basis.

The fee associated with the Drupal Website is \$300.00. This fee includes 1 hour of training on how to use or update the site. There is also a Drupal Community site with an active web forum, and training and support for the product. Manuals for Drupal are also posted for reference.

In the event of transitioning the Web Site support to another responsible user, there would be a \$75 fee for another training session.

## **Feedback and Recommendations:**

Much like last year's feedback, there is still a general need for assistance on campus with web development for student groups. Clubs are having difficulty maintaining and updating personal or club sites. There is a lack of continuity in terms of who is managing the site, and the turnover means every few years a new person with a different skill set becomes responsible.

Although it was perceived very favourably, pricing was still a major barrier for many groups to use the hosted solution. Budgets are set at the beginning of the student year, and typically there is no or little funds for Web Site hosting.

1. Consider requesting the fees for student association web sites be covered via SLEF (Student Life Enhancement Fund ) grants, or some other form of grant.
2. Assist student groups in creating branded common look/feel sites. Currently there is no University level mandate to keep web sites current or adhere to any standards.
3. Disseminate information and options for web development more effectively.

## **VI. Courselink on D2L (Desire to Learn)**

Kyle Mackie and Scott Merritt from COLES (Centre for Open Learning and Educational Support) presented to the group on the CourseLink application, which runs on the D2L Platform. CourseLink has 1000+ course sites, with approximately 75% of instructors using it. It is not mandatory however some departments do mandate it at their level. There is a mobile D2L app, and it is worth noting the amount of traffic is higher than expected.

The next release of Courselink will open up the API to Web Services, which will allow D2L to share data with external applications. e.g. bringing information into Course link from tools such as Gryphmail calendar, Wikipedia, Word press and many others. ePortfolio is an application already integrated with CourseLink. This is a collection of your learning artifacts during the course of your studies here that you can export and take with you upon graduation. Some professors are working on lecture capture, others are using private YouTube links to publish lectures, as well as integrating Skype and other technology into lecture delivery. The copyright and accessibility impact of collecting disparate data sources in CourseLink was discussed.

Recommendations:

1. Students would like to see the adoption of lecture capture technology be a priority; the concept of learning at a pace and time that suited them is seen as valuable. They feel it would greatly enhance their learning to be able to review lectures, e.g. multiple viewings of advanced concepts presented, exam preparation.
2. Students were concerned that complexity of legislative and policy compliance would prevent their professors from being able to take advantage of the full functionality available in CourseLink for new initiatives like lecture capture and Web Services.



## VII. Accessibility

Throughout the ITSAC sessions, we touched on accessibility as it related to the topic at hand. There seemed to be common themes that surfaced as seen in the recommendations.

Accessibility is viewed as an important consideration for all areas. There are situations where the tool or software is not flexible enough to allow for full accessibility.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Student organizations and clubs should be offered accessibility training.
2. CourseLink videos should include transcripts, and there should be guidelines set for creation with accessibility in mind.

Note: Based on the ITSAC feedback from students, CCS applied for summer University Research Assistantship (URA) position to review the accessibility of three main student applications, CourseLink, WebAdvisor and Gryphmail. The application was approved and the AODA ICS audit of these three applications is in progress.

## VIII. CCS Service Catalog

Ann Cesar from CCS gave a presentation on the upcoming CCS Service Catalog which is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2012.

The Service Catalogue is intended to offer a user-friendly menu with access to various resources. Each service within the Catalogue will include a description of the service, who can request the service, associated costs, how to request the service and service support.

The intention is to present services in a language the customers will understand. There will be a common interface for all services making it easier to navigate. Ann demonstrated a current Service Catalog at McGill University to provide a frame of reference.

Ann also conducted a click survey to gather information from the committee regarding the Catalog. This feedback will be used in the project.

Committee members expressed that it would be very good to be able to access services in a more uniform manner, and from home. It was also thought that a central location to access services would be of help to first year students. Feedback from previous years has expressed the lack of upfront information for first year students presents a learning curve in accessing services.

One concern expressed was the fact this Service Catalog will not be on the main page of the University Web Site.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Create a good communication plan to ensure students are aware of the rollout of the catalog.
2. Offer training sessions to potential users.
3. If possible place at least a link on the main Web Page to the Service Catalog.

## **IX. IT Trends Impacting Students**

Dave Dornan and Ruth Smith from Computing and Communication Services presented to ITSAC on Current and Future IT Trends impacting Students. The two main presentation topics were:

1. The changing educational delivery model, areas covered were:
  - learning analytics and the potential to engage and empower students
  - open learning initiatives, with free courses offered online by existing institutions and new learning initiatives such as peer-to-peer
  - the effect of these initiatives, changing the student role from that of a passive learner to an active creator
  - privacy of information and security risks to be aware of when participating in these types of initiatives
2. Free cloud based tools available to assist with learning, such as Google Docs, Skype and Dropbox. Areas highlighted were:
  - a student's expectations of a free service should be different from centrally provided university services, there are no guarantees of reliability and security, example of multiple Facebook privacy issues in the news
  - a student should be aware they are responsible for protecting their identity and data, as well as information on others they are collecting for educational purposes, example of research data for a thesis that contains personal information on other people and is subject to university research ethics policies

### **Feedback and/or Recommendations:**

1. Be aware students are frustrated when it's assumed they are comfortable with a variety of technology based on the generalization that they are all part of the 'tech savvy' generation. New tools and services that can assist students with their learning are of interest, but have the potential to be a barrier to learning based on the technology learning curve required. Students recommended an integrated approach to introducing new services that takes into account varying levels of technical competence.
2. Students are less concerned with privacy of information and security issues in respect to online learning tools and courses than the university is. Overall their feeling was that they were already posting their personal information online in various open forums, and are comfortable with widely sharing their academic work.

## X. WebAdvisor

Tim Frank from the Office of the University Registrar presented WebAdvisor, which is the student browser based interface to the main Student Information System. The purpose of WebAdvisor is to emulate online many of the over the counter processes a student traditionally had to conduct in person at the Registrar's office. Many processes such as course registration are online and can be done at a time convenient for the student.

The WebAdvisor application is vendor developed and there are only a few customizations that Guelph has made to the product. Small changes have been made to apply the U of G style and branding, as well as integrating with the "AskGryph" application. In the summer of 2011, there was a major upgrade in both the hardware and software for the system, and this resulted in improved performance starting in the Fall 2011 semester.

Recommendations:

1. Students would like to see the application process to transfer/apply to a different U of G program moved online.
2. Adding the ability to scan in signatures on late add forms would improve the process.
3. Seeing a historical summary of Financial Account summary transactions would be useful.
4. Saving the course schedule as standard calendar .ics file would let students export the information to other calendars, right now they can only save it as a .pdf file.

## XI. Library IT Survey

Randy Oldham from the Library presented to ITSAC on the results of the Student IT Survey from last year. The survey is designed to get an understanding of Student IT behaviours and trends.

After providing some basic facts about the number of respondents and the format of the survey, Randy provided each committee member with an iclicker and walked us through responding to a number of survey questions. This format kept us engaged, and allowed Randy to discuss the full results of the survey questions while we reflected on our responses.

Several of the questions were related to the use of loaner laptops and desktops in the Library. There are 125 laptops and 260 Desktops available to sign out in the library. Valuable information about student needs is gained by measuring preferences for laptop or desktop use. Perhaps surprisingly, students preferred signing out a desktop as it provided Library "real estate" and they did not have to worry about a laptop power plug.

The results of the survey are used to either effect real change or move in a different direction. For instance, based on survey results the Library is now looking at extending the loaner time for laptops. The library plan to create a mobile website was discontinued based on a lack of interest in internet browsing

on smart phones. The use of D2L has inspired the possibility of the Library injecting library content into D2L modules, as well as delivering services like course reserves through D2L

**Recommendations:**

1. Consider tweaking some of the survey questions as some appeared to be a bit leading or vague.
2. Continue to solicit feedback in the form of the survey, and use the information in planning.

## **XII. Other Student Computing recommendations/comments**

- An Issue was raised regarding mail server security vulnerability. You can connect to the outbound SMTP server and send emails as anyone. The details were forwarded to the GryphMail team for action.
- Cell phone signal is sporadic in some areas, especially South residence.
- Gryphmail delivery issues in the month of October 2011. Feedback reported that mail sent was not getting delivered, and general mail slowdown. It is possible this as during the attempted migration of mail. Passed on issue.
- Sporadic Issues with wireless internet access in Johnston Hall. Students getting dropped from wireless consistently every 10 minutes. Signal is sporadic and weak with signal loss on moving from room to room.
- MAC support continues to be requested. A MAC anti-virus option available is now available via CCS Software distribution.

### XIII. How Can We Make ITSAC Even Better?

While it is the role of the ITSAC Chairs to encourage students to volunteer their time, effort and investment in ITSAC, this can be challenging when the committee representatives consist of Student Government representatives that already have very busy schedules. We continued with the meeting times on Friday afternoon 3:30 – 5:30 to continue to solicit better attendance; however, while attendance at meetings improved, even more participation would be ideal.

Based on some discussion between this years committee Chairs and the participants, the following ideas were shared and should be discussed with next year's committee members. Perhaps some of these fall outside of the mandate of the committee, but some should be considered during the annual review of the ITSAC Terms of Reference.

Recommendations for changes to consider with ITSAC going forward (some of these recommendations were carried forward from previous ITSAC reports).

- Ensure that the ITSAC report is used to prompt real change. While it is expected that the report be sent to those interested and relevant parties, there is no formal process for doing so. The report has been sent to ISC (Information Services Committee) in the past, but this should be formalized. Perhaps this process should be documented somewhere in the terms of reference?
- It may be useful for someone to do a look back across reports to see the areas where concerns have been previously raised, to ensure they are being adequately addressed going forward (and not just being raised year to year).
- Look at inviting other regional campus participants to connect remotely to the meetings. Use Adobe Connect to facilitate this.
- Bring together past Chairs from ITSAC and discuss, as a group, the challenges and successes of ITSAC, and perhaps present some strategies for improvement or change.
- It is really great to hear student's perspectives on these topics at the meeting. Perhaps to ensure there is better participation at the meetings so that a suitable conclusion can be made, we could ask the student committee members bring a friend to meetings if they like?
- Perhaps ITSAC could host something like an *Open Forum*, welcoming students to show up and share feedback and insights about their IT needs and concerns. i.e. are there other ways that ITSAC can solicit IT feedback and ideas from students?
- Send a survey to the student committee members at the beginning of the year to help determine the topics for discussion for the year.
- Determine methods for getting the students more engaged at ITSAC meetings. For instance asking that there be a rotating 'student chair' or meeting leader?
- Review the timing for the ITSAC final report- usually the report is sent out in the summer, when preparations for the Fall semester communications have already begun, i.e. is the timing off? Or can recommendations/feedback be sent immediately to those relevant parties, throughout the year.

- Meet with student group presidents and leaders to emphasize the importance of ITSAC, solicit their feedback around its value, and help to ensure that all member groups send a representative to ITSAC meetings.

#### **XIV. Thanks! to our Guests and Committee Members**

We would like to send out a special thanks to the Guests who attended our meetings this year and presented on various topics. We appreciate your time and the valuable information that you shared with the committee.

#### **XV. IT Bytes - General IT Issues**

At the end of every ITSAC meeting, committee members had the opportunity to bring up any IT issues or questions that they would like to discuss or get an explanation or answer to. If the issue cannot be answered immediately it is the responsibility of the Chairs to take the issue to members of CCS or the University community that should be able to provide info or an answer. Questions were taken forward to the appropriate areas as they were raised.

#### **XVI. Conclusion:**

Overall ITSAC had a successful year. We met ~once per month throughout the year to review IT applications and services at the University of Guelph. ITSAC members have been very committed to providing input and feedback to the various topics. At times the committee struggled with attendance and engagement issues, but we are very appreciative of those who actively engaged and participated in the committee and look forward to the continued success of ITSAC in future years.

The ITSAC Chairs would like to extend a thank-you to everyone who gave up a Friday evening to attend ITSAC. Your contributions are very important to the continued success of ITSAC.