Texas A&M Information Technology ANNUAL REPORT 2009
While many challenges confronted us in this year of economic turmoil, we installed new services and continued to upgrade existing resources to meet the needs of a growing university population:

- Enhanced the university’s information technology environment to meet student educational and information needs, including continuing implementation of the web-based student information system; providing more discounted software options; increasing campus computer lab access; and augmenting teaching technology resources.
- Increased access to research computing by providing supercomputing consulting services, which provide intensive programming assistance for faculty and other advanced users.
- Advanced communication capabilities by boosting mobile technology support on campus; augmenting conferencing capabilities; providing public television and radio broadcasting; and commencing on the Voice-over-Internet Protocol conversion to replace legacy campus phone systems.
- Improved emergency notification by deploying the new Code Maroon system and Emergency Alert System (EAS) radios in campus departments. Collaborated with local cities and counties for a joint emergency operations center and interoperable emergency radio system.
- Sustained high-quality network access for the university and The Texas A&M University System by completing infrastructure upgrades to the TTVN wide area data network and continuing support to the LEARN high-speed optical network.
- Enhanced high-security hardware centralized access management for secure access to resources between institutions.
- Enhanced information security by installing email security appliances; deploying initiatives to tighten security for university information resources; and participating in a national campaign to raise awareness of computer security issues.
- Delivered IT support by providing 24-hour help, hardware repair services, application development, software maintenance, and VOIP/telecommunication support services.
- Achieved savings for the university and participating A&M System members through shared IT infrastructure and services, including discounted software licensing, bulk computer purchases, and federated identity management for secure access to resources between institutions.

The Road Ahead

As our nation and the world experience difficult economic times, we are mindful about using funds entrusted to us wisely and prudently. Not only do we control expenditures now, we must have a sustained focus on managing costs going forward. We will strive to return added value for every service we provide as we continue to support Texas A&M’s mission and goals.

We also must look beyond the immediate economic crisis and focus on improving our organization for the future. We will concentrate on building a higher level of trust with the academic community by being more proactive and responsive organization. We will continue to adapt new, quality solutions because we believe that the successful use of technology can be transformative – enabling creativity, feeding innovative thinking, and nourishing a passion for learning.

Though many hurdles must be overcome, I am confident that our team of highly skilled and motivated IT professionals is up to the challenge. We will continue to adopt new, quality solutions because we believe that the successful use of technology can be transformative – enabling creativity, feeding innovative thinking, and nourishing a passion for learning.

I encourage you to share your questions and suggestions with me and members of our team as we strive to provide the best possible IT environment for Texas A&M.

Dr. Pierce Cantrell
Vice President and Associate Provost
for Information Technology
and Chief Information Officer
Texas A&M University
MESSAGE FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT: 2
WHO WE ARE: 5
ENHANCING STUDENT ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES: 6
ELEVATING FACULTY TEACHING AND RESEARCH: 11
STRENGTHENING COMMUNICATIONS: 16
SUPPORTING CUSTOMER SERVICES: 19
IMPROVING NETWORK AND INFRASTRUCTURE RESOURCES: 22
BUILDING COMMUNITY: 25
ADVANCING SHARED SERVICES AND COST-SAVING MEASURES: 28
BUDGET SUMMARY: 31

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Texas A&M Information Technology
The Office of the Vice President and Associate Provost for Information Technology and the departments of Texas A&M IT provide services and resources that help the faculty, students, and staff of Texas A&M University to use technologies to achieve excellence in teaching, research, learning, outreach, and administrative pursuits.

COMPUTING & INFORMATION SERVICES
Computing & Information Services (CIS) provides core IT infrastructure resources and facilities that support the campus and the departments within Texas A&M IT. CIS operates central campus servers that house mission-critical data and services, including email, Internet and network access, campus wireless, web server, central mail, centralized computing, and enterprise applications. CIS provides campus computer labs, 24-hour data center through Help Desk Central, hardware and software support, custom application development, discounted software for departments and individuals, as well as the university Supercomputing Facility.

EDUCATIONAL BROADCAST SERVICES
Educational Broadcast Services (EBS) is comprised of KAMU-TV/DU, KAMU-FM, and TTVN. They offer a unique synergy of technology and expertise for a wide area network, interactive communications, public broadcasting, and audio/video production that broadens the range of services available to the university community. EBS provides public radio and television broadcasting services to Bryan/College Station and surrounding areas.

ENTERPRISE INFORMATION SYSTEMS
Enterprise Information Systems (EIS) is responsible for the implementation and maintenance of new mission-critical enterprise-wide information systems at Texas A&M. The existing legacy student information management system is being replaced by Compass, the new web-based information system for Texas A&M University College Station, Galveston, and Qatar campuses. EIS is also responsible for training and troubleshooting the console for the Smart Sympodium or document camera. EIS personnel also deliver and set up equipment for classes or other functions in classrooms.

INSTRUCTIONAL MEDIA SERVICES
Instructional Media Services (IMS) provides and supports multimedia equipment and technology tools that enhance the overall security posture of the university.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS
Telecommunications provides fast, reliable, and cost-effective telecommunications services from data to voice, dial-up to high-speed, and wired to cellular. They offer voice services to all A&M System offices in College Station and other offices in Texas, international locations, as well as all network service contracts for A&M System member locations. They support security and surveillance systems on campus, as well as manage the university’s two-way radio system. Telecommunications also manages the campus cable television system and fiber optic cable plant, as well as the Emergency Alert System, a component of the university’s Code Maroon system that provides the ability to rapidly distribute emergency information to the campus.
ENHANCING STUDENT ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES

» Expand access to services that support the university’s educational mission.

» Provide resources to meet student learning and information needs and enable students to live and compete in a global society.

COMPUTING CENTERS PROVIDE UNIVERSAL TECHNOLOGY ACCESS

Open Access Labs (OAL) provide computers, printers, and peripherals in six fully staffed centers and nine supported locations. Most labs operate extended business hours while classes are in session, including two locations that are open 24 hours during the week.

Projects were completed that addressed the needs of the growing student population to access OAL services:

- Increased network home drive space from 100 to 500 Mb for more data storage capacity.
- Collaborated with the University Libraries to offer computers with the same login and operating environment as the OALs, which are already familiar to students. Also, library computers will be replaced on a three-year cycle similar to OAL computers.
- Extended OAL printing resources to the libraries. Student fees provide each student with a printing allocation every semester. Through the labs, students receive secure network and web space, which can be accessed from any OAL computer, from on-campus residence halls and apartments, via the campus wireless network, and from off-campus through the Virtual Open Access Lab (VOAL).

- Published a new web site for People.tamu.edu, a service that allows authorized A&M users to publish a personal web page.
- Provided OAL login accounts to all staff, which give access to OAL computers. Previously, each department had to grant accounts to their staff.

Mobile device use among students is virtually universal, presenting both opportunities and challenges for higher education to enrich student learning and living experiences. Recent improvements in campus wireless technology assist delivery of innovative educational applications to students via mobile devices.

- The Distributed Antenna System (DAS), an innovative wireless technology, augmented mobile service throughout the Texas A&M campus, especially in high cell usage areas such as residence halls, AT&T and Verizon Wireless have signed agreements with Texas A&M to use DAS (see page 18).
- TAMULink wireless coverage expanded to 152 buildings, up from 107 buildings in 2008. The number of buildings with complete wireless coverage increased from 46 to 92. The average amount of data being sent through the TAMULink wireless network in 2008 was twice that of 2007.

- TAMU Email Mobile allows users to access their TAMU Email, calendar, contacts, and other online services on personal smart phones or PDAs. All Texas A&M students and faculty receive TAMU Email accounts.

STUDENT ADOPTION OF MOBILE DEVICES INCREASES

A 2009 survey of university students in the U.S. showed that 51.2 percent own an Internet-capable handheld device, up from 12 percent in 2007. Laptop ownership increased 23 percentage points, while desktop ownership decreased 27 points.

1. ECAR Study of Undergraduate Students and Information Technology, 2009 (www.educause.edu/library/ers0906).
"IT’S U P TO YOU" CAMPAIGN RAISES AWARENESS OF INFORMATION SECURITY

Information security refers to protecting computers and electronic information from hacking, viruses, or other misuse. Not only is it vital to protecting an institution’s assets, such as computing systems and proprietary information, information security is essential for protecting personal privacy and accounts.

Texas A&M IT conducted a month-long information security awareness campaign in October 2008, which featured the Security Challenge. Students logged in to take a weekly online quiz on a security topic and were entered into prize drawings. Itsuuptoyou.tamu.edu was created to host the Security Challenge and featured security-related videos made by and for students on the TAMUSecurity YouTube channel. The web site and promotional campaign received awards from the International Association of Business Communicators and the Association of Computing Machinery Special Interest Group on University and College Computing Services.

COMPASS CONNECTS THE CAMPUS TO MULTIPLE SERVICES

Implementing Compass, the new web-based student information system, continued for Texas A&M’s three campuses in College Station, Galveston, and Qatar. The university purchased the web-based system, which uses an Oracle database, from SunGard Higher Education. Howdy is the web portal through which users access their university records and use Compass services.

Key milestones critical to the project’s success were met during fiscal year 2009, including launching new Compass modules:

- Admissions module – received and processed 95,132 applications for admission and over 150,000 test scores. Applications from ApplyTexas, a centralized site where students can apply to most postsecondary institutions in Texas, load information into Compass.
- Registration module – registered 51,236 students for the fall 2009 term.
- Curriculum Advising Program Planning (Degree Audit) module – contains the degree evaluation (audit) for students, adjustments, and student curriculum.
- Accounts Receivable – processed 50,904 refunds for $77,177,272 to 25,841 students.
- Installed TouchNet, a third-party online bill payment solution, which provides real-time updates to student accounts in Compass.
- Operational Data Store (ODS) and Compass Reports (ePrint) – augmented reporting capabilities.
- Compass Scheduler (Appworx) – improved scheduling of Compass jobs.

Additional goals were met that supported Compass implementation:

- Converted over 82 million academic records and financial histories of former and current students from the legacy student information management system into Compass.
- Trained over 1,800 employees to use the system.
- Launched self-service Compass components in Howdy to students, faculty, and advisors.
- Processed 510 Compass work requests to provide capabilities not in the baseline SunGard product.
- Processed 3,852 applications for December 2009 graduation.

MOVING FORWARD

STUDENT ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES

- Increase network Home drive space from 500 GB to 1 GB.
- Begin a two-year initiative to provide wireless in campus residence halls.
- Convert to new wireless technology that will increase the speed of TAMULink wireless access.
- Complete the final SMS to Compass data conversion.
- Implement class roster, class email lists, and online-grade submission in Howdy.
- Conduct information security awareness campaigns, including a month-long campaign in October and year-round security poster and crossword puzzle campaign.

NUMBER OF HOWDY USERS GROWS

Howdy now has 127,400 users, including applicants, students, faculty, staff, former students, parents, and guardians.
GOING THE EXTRA MILE - CONNECTING THE SOLTIS BIODIVERSITY RESEARCH CENTER

The Soltis Center for Research and Education in Costa Rica was established in January 2009 to provide international experience to Aggies, while protecting the unique ecological setting and creating awareness for preservation. Located in the humid rain forests of Costa Rica, about three hours northwest of San Jose, the country’s capital, IT services to the eight residential buildings. Texas A&M IT staff worked onsite to equip the center with voice, data, and wireless infrastructure. They installed a VoIP system, connected a router to the Internet (soon to be Internet2 through an agreement with the University of Costa Rica), and installed WiFi infrastructure for the remote center needed to be built from the ground up. Texas A&M worked with ICE, the local telephone company in Costa Rica, to run 3.5 miles of fiberoptic cable to support high-speed Internet access at the center.

Texas A&M IT staff who worked on the project included Walt Magnussen, Debra Duncan, Rick Noble, Chris Norton, and Joe Shafer.

"Working at a site where the nearest hardware store was four hours away was challenging," said Rick Noble, Telecom Security Surveillance Systems Technician. At times there was a technical jargon barrier in addition to a language barrier. "We get used to using specialized terminology that was sometimes difficult to convey to our translators," said Chris Norton, Lead Systems Administrator. But through a team effort with the center’s staff, “Everything worked out. We were able to complete everything on time,” said Mr. Noble.

The Texas A&M IT team was proud to be a part of making the vision of the Soltis Center a reality and appreciated the unique experiences the assignment provided. “It was the most beautiful place I’ve ever seen,” said Debra Duncan, IT Manager. “The center’s staff was so knowledgeable and very dedicated to preserving the rain forests. Visiting the center would be a great opportunity for any student.”

TECHNOLOGY PROVIDES FLEXIBLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

With technology, learning goes beyond the confines of a physical classroom. Virtual classrooms allow students and instructors to connect and communicate in new ways and engage in innovative learning experiences. The Texas A&M eLearning system uses Blackboard Vista, an enterprise learning management system. Resources continue to be improved for accessing and using eLearning.

- Integrated the eLearning system with the new Compass student information system, including grade adapter and enrollment data.
- Enhanced disaster recovery procedures by implementing a redundant eLearning standby system in the campus data center.
- Developed and deployed a web-based faculty eLearning Orientation training module for instructors.
- New services were offered, along with training and learning opportunities, for integrating instructional technology into teaching.
- Developed and debuted the Texas A&M Second Life Campus, providing a unique, no-cost educational virtual space where students, instructors, and visitors can discover, connect, and learn.
- Published the Teaching with Technology newsletter, Fall 2008, Spring 2009, Fall 2009 which was attended by educators from across the A&M System.
- Sponsored the Instructional Technology Showcase (Fall 2008) which was attended by educators from across the A&M System.
- Offered training on technology tools for emergency preparedness, which would help maintain continuity of learning during an event that makes it difficult for students or faculty to attend classes.
- Conducted a week-long netDOC CAST, which provided opportunities for instructors to receive hands-on experience and one-on-one consultations for building course content in an informal, relaxed setting before the start of the fall semester.

NUMBERS OF COURSES USING ELEARNING CONTINUE TO GROW

- Fall 2008: 2,384 courses - up from 1,718 in Fall 2007
- Spring 2009: 2,881 courses - up from 1,803 in Spring 2008

ELEVATING FACULTY TEACHING AND RESEARCH

» Promote technology and information availability to support teaching, research, and scholarship.
» Maintain and develop the Supercomputing Facility as a premier research resource.
» Conducted a week-long netDOC CAST which provided opportunities for instructors to receive hands-on experience and one-on-one consultations for building course content in an informal, relaxed setting before the start of the fall semester.
» Offered training on technology tools for emergency preparedness, which would help maintain continuity of learning during an event that makes it difficult for students or faculty to attend classes.
» Sponsored the Instructional Technology Showcase (Fall 2008) where campus educators presented sessions on software applications, technology concepts, and innovative methods for enhancing student learning.
» Sponsored the Teaching with Technology Conference (spring 2009) which was attended by educators from across the A&M System.
» Published the Teaching with Technology newsletter, Fall 2008, Spring 2009, Fall 2009 which was attended by educators from across the A&M System.
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Texas A&M IT staff who worked on the project included Vish Nagraj, Delora Duncan, Rick Noble, Chris Norton, and Joe Shafer.

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CLASSROOM IT SUPPORT PUTS THE FOCUS ON TEACHING
User-friendly technologies installed in 128 classrooms allow instructors to concentrate on teaching instead of how to operate complex equipment. With automated equipment in 83 of these classrooms, instructors control audio-visual equipment through simple options on the classroom's computer screen. Sympodiums enable instructors to provide a more interactive classroom experience by using an interactive pen to write on presentations with digital ink, accessing web sites, and showing multimedia files. In fiscal year 2009, automated systems were installed in 19 rooms and permanent equipment was installed in four rooms.

GRANT PROGRAMS IMPROVE INSTRUCTIONAL COMPUTING
Grant programs administered by Texas A&M IT are used to fund proposals that positively impact the instructional computing environment. The Computer Access/Instructional Technology Fees (CA/ITF) Competitive Grant program distributed $200,000 during fiscal year 2009. Also, $193,000 was distributed in matching funds for departments and colleges to upgrade classroom technology through the Classroom Instructional Technology Matching Grant program.

FUNDING PROGRAM KEEPS FACULTY WORKSTATIONS UPDATED
The Faculty Workstation Program represents the commitment of the administration of Texas A&M to replace computer workstations for faculty members at least every four years. The program is made possible by the commitment of funds from the Office of the President, the VPAP IT Capital Computer Equipment fund, and the Dean, department, or individual faculty member's grant funds. The total annual funding for the program on both the Galveston and College Station campuses was $933,000.

MOVING MOUNTAINS EVERY DAY - MEETING THE DEMAND FOR CLASSROOM IT EQUIPMENT
Every class day, a small army of student workers carry data projectors, computers, and other media equipment to classrooms throughout the campus, then bring it all back to the media center when the class is over. Regina Greenwood, IT Manager, envisions a day when seeing students hauling equipment in projector bags will be a thing of the past.

“Every year the demand for audio-visual equipment increases. Upgrading our classrooms will enable us to keep up with requests, decrease our wage budget, and cover more territory,” she said. In the future, Ms. Greenwood’s student worker brigade may become smaller, but the need to haul equipment around campus won’t disappear completely.

“We’ll still have portable equipment for emergencies, thesis defenses, and other special events.”
The Supercomputing Facility supports the university with expertise and leading-edge hardware for large-scale scientific computation. The facility has progressively become an integral part of outstanding research and discovery in many fields and disciplines. Supercomputing users, mostly faculty and graduate students, engage in a wide spectrum of research and discovery with expertise and leading-edge hardware for large-scale scientific computation. The eight analysts and one customer service representatives provide expert support with their strong backgrounds in computer architecture, code analysis, and parallelization, in addition to offering specialized short courses. In 2010, the current computing capacity included obtaining computer results per run in a few hours instead of days. Two projects exemplify this special service: Actively participated in SP-xxL, IBM's international cluster systems and other permanently installed equipment. To expand supercomputing short course offerings, including basic topics in computer architecture and operating systems. The Supercomputing Facility offers intensive help to advanced users, including faculty researchers and graduate students, to provide assistance with code porting, code parallelization, code optimization, and job analysis. This service typically requires a very high level of technical expertise and a significant investment in personnel hours. The resulting benefits include obtaining computer results per run in a few hours instead of days. Two projects exemplify this special service: 

- The facility engages in projects that significantly simplify the process of obtaining a supercomputing account. 
- Launched a new, improved Supercomputing Facility web site (sc.tamu.edu).

NEW SUPERCOMPUTING CLUSTER ACQUIRED

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- Faculty analyst Ping Luo applied her expertise in code optimization and parallelization to obtain a four-fold performance boost to programs that Professor Ben Giese of Oceanography uses in his research. 
- Dr. Raffaele Montuoro, also a facility analyst, obtained a four-to-five-fold acceleration on the computer portion of genome analysis research of Professor James Sacchettini, Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics.
**STRENGTHENING COMMUNICATION**

- Provide effective communication and collaboration tools essential to the success of Texas A&M’s mission.
- Deliver economical, shared communication solutions to communal issues.

**CODE MAROON SYSTEM MEETS CRISIS COMMUNICATION NEEDS**

In the event of a campus emergency, timely delivery of information to students, faculty and staff is of the utmost importance. Implementing the new Code Maroon emergency notification system gives Texas A&M the ability to quickly communicate health and safety emergency information by SMS text message, Texas A&M Email, KAAM-FM radio, campus cable television, Emergency Alert System radios, Twitter, and RSS feeds. The university chose Athoc as its new vendor because their system uses a robust, integrated system to send alerts through multiple channels from a single web interface. An extensive communications and marketing campaign informed students and employees to sign up for text message alerts in the new system. Promotions featured student athletes, leaders, and Reveille, the official mascot of Texas A&M. Over 27,600 people signed up for the new Code Maroon by the end of August 2009, when the new system went live.

**COMMUNITIES COLLABORATE FOR A JOINT EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER**

The cities of Bryan and College Station, Brazos County, and Texas A&M entered into an agreement in 2007 to create a Community Shared Emergency Operations Center (CSEOC) to be housed in Fibertown, a commercial data center in Bryan, Texas. A&M IT installed the voice and data network components to allow the CSEOC to use and share infrastructure from all four partners when available, and to be able to operate in complete standalone mode if all network connections were severed. The CSEOC has been successfully activated three times since its inception in June 2009.

University administrators came to Texas A&M IT with a challenge: provide the campus with a better emergency notification system. The existing system had limited capabilities, and a more comprehensive system was needed to relate content through many channels to over 47,000 students and thousands of employees during a crisis. Integration with campus directory services was not possible with the previous system, so maintaining accounts when users graduated or left employment was difficult. Most importantly, faster delivery of alerts was crucial.

Texas A&M IT’s Solutions and Support group (formerly Customer Applications) was tasked with coordinating the effort to find a superior emergency notification solution. The group assisted in evaluating vendors and an in-house solution to determine which product would work best and be the most cost-effective. Judith Lewis, Senior IT Manager, Sancy Wu, Senior IT Manager, and Marlin Crouse, Senior Lead Software Applications Developer, led the project management team that implemented the new integrated solution. The project called for understanding the needs of many stakeholders including Risk & Compliance, University Police, Telecommunications, University Marketing & Communications, and others. The team marshaled the expertise within Texas A&M IT to implement the system and integrate it with the campus IT architecture. “One of the great features of the new solution is that it uses a single, integrated system to send messages in a handful of notification channels. Texas A&M’s goal is to reach as many people as possible in an emergency. This is a very robust solution for us,” said project leader Judith Lewis.

The team continues to improve the service with new communication channels. “We’re planning to activate desktop pop-ups in the near future. This is a good solution for alerting employees sitting at work computers or students in computer labs,” said technical lead Martin Crans. Audio alerts in classrooms will begin to be installed next year which will warn students where cell phones have been silenced so as not to disrupt classes or where cellular signals are weak.

**EAS RADIOS RELAY EMERGENCY MESSAGES**

Emergency Alert System radios were deployed in all campus departments across all of Texas A&M’s Code Maroon service. These radios provide additional ability to quickly communicate emergency health and safety information.

**GETTING THE WORD OUT - IMPROVING THE CAMPUS EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM**

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With a $2.8 million grant from the Federal Emergency Communications Commission to support CALEA, the criteria of the warrant can be sent to a central server for transmission to law enforcement. This shared CALEA system was purchased that allows each router within their network. Information that meets all worked together to indicate that the time was right to begin the process. Verizon was chosen to provide an Aastra based, carrier-grade solution, which provides enterprise-wide service authentication to allow the existing 800-Mhz radio system to mobile service on the Texas A&M campus. In the future, campus fiber to couple transmitters with cellular antennas. This solution lowers cost of expanding cell coverage with carriers sharing a common infrastructure. Voice-over-Internet Protocol (VoIP) services, which lets users make phone calls over the Internet by converting analog audio signals into digital data. Conversion to VoIP is necessary because legacy phone systems currently become larger manufactured. As applications such as voice and video IP-based networks become more standard, support for non-VoIP technology becomes a greater issue. This fact is being reinforced by mergers in the telecommunications industry. A further reason for the migration to VoIP is that the existing telephone cable plant is nearly 50 years old and is failing in some areas. Limitations to capital budgets and the large cost of the conversion require the migration to be spread over several years. The loss of support for legacy technology, the failing cable plant, and the lengthy conversion period all worked together to indicate that the time was right to begin the process. Shibboleth team drive to the location, meet briefly with the campus CIO, then roll up their sleeves and get to work with the local IT staff to set up a Shibboleth instance. The Shibboleth team worked with campus counterparts has formed lasting bonds that will continue to make Shibboleth a success for the A&M System. They were able to provide us with the access we needed in the form of directory service accounts, firewall access, and campus fiber to couple transmitters with cellular antennas. This solution lowers cost of expanding cell coverage with carriers sharing a common infrastructure. Infrastructure that provides secure online access to shared resources across institutional boundaries. Shibboleth enables users to log in to services with their own institution’s login credentials for greater convenience and enhanced security and privacy of account information. Shibboleth has been deployed at many A&M System campuses including College Station, Kingsville, Galveston, Kingsville, Paris, Victoria, Dallat, Denton, Temple, and West Texas. Texas A&M’s online software store was upgraded to enable students and employees of these Shibboleth-enabled campuses to purchase discounted software, improving volume-buying capabilities and reducing costs.
It was the first day of class when Help Desk Central received a frantic call that the network was down for an entire building. Faculty and staff couldn’t access their email or files. Instructors were unable to log into classroom computers. A 30-second phone call upon expertise within the entire organization for answers. "It’s like being part of an organic machine," said Mike Dennison, Senior Lead IT Consultant, describing his role in solving problems is all in a day’s work and beyond for the campus call center. An urgent call came in about a printer problem. “It wasn’t just any printer problem,” said Tom Swanner, Senior IT Manager. “Month-end closing statements needed to be printed by the end of that day.” Dave Cox, IT Team Leader, took the call at home on his day off – and resolved some firewall settings, allowing the reports to be printed on time. “Getting calls resolved some firewall settings, allowing the reports to be printed on time.”

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**IMPROVING NETWORK AND INFRASTRUCTURE RESOURCES**

- Provide a quality, high-capacity network that meets the university’s needs for continuous access to information.
- Furnish a robust and secure technology infrastructure that is the necessary foundation for an exceptional learning environment.

**TTVN PROVIDES SYSTEM-WIDE NETWORKING AND INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATIONS**

**TTVN** is the Wide Area Data Network (WAN) that provides statewide backbone service and access circuits to all members of the A&M System. Services riding anywhere via the Internet. LambdaRail, and a statewide intranet that facilitates result in increased Internet bandwidth and reliability over-Internet Protocol (VoIP). TTVN also provides multi-point videoconferencing for classes, meetings, and provides statewide backbone service and access circuits from 1 to 10 Gbps. National LambdaRail and Packetfeet peering was established at 10 Gbps.

- Implemented major bandwidth upgrades to TTVN member campuses. TAMU-Galveston established a shared Gigabit Ethernet connection to the TTVN backbone through a cooperative agreement with the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston. Tarleton State University replaced their DS-3 network access with OC-3 to prepare for the University's Learning Environment strategy for the campus. TAMUS agencies upgraded a number of T1 or frame relay circuits to higher bandwidth, and reliable INM circuits. Service to these connections is made possible by the high bandwidth LEARN backbone.

**DATA CENTERS GEAR UP FOR VIRTUALIZATION**

In the campus data centers, hundreds of servers connect computers to applications used daily, link to the Internet, and store files, email messages, and other data vital to the university. Maintaining and renewing these servers is essential computers to applications used daily, link to the Internet, and store files, email messages, and other data vital to the university. Maintaining and renewing these servers is essential computers to applications used daily, link to the Internet, and store files, email messages, and other data vital to the university. Maintaining and renewing these servers is essential.

- Efforts began to consolidate and virtualize servers to more efficiently use limited facilities, reduce energy consumption, and provide more reliable services to customers. In a traditional computing environment, individual machine run one application using individual machines. Virtualized servers run on virtual machine software that can divide a single server into multiple virtual machines. Information on each VM is isolated from the physical server. This makes it easy to move VMs around the data center and offload older, less critical workloads onto new servers. Physical servers are simpler to manage and can run more workloads, which improves efficiency and reduces costs.

**OPERATIONS CENTER MONITORS CAMPUSSYSTEMS 24/7**

If cooling or power in a data center becomes compromised, it can cause a number of problems. If cooling equipment overheats and starts shutting down, potentially damaging data and infrastructure disaster recovery plans; and Aperture data center management software, which provides monitoring and control of the data center environment.

- Regional and enterprise web-based software tools that will centralize disaster recovery planning efforts when fully implemented. Living Disaster Recovery Planning System (LDRPS), which uses a relational database that links application, hardware, business process, and infrastructure disaster recovery plans; and Aperture data center management software, which provides monitoring and control of the data center environment.

**BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND DISASTER RECOVERY PLANNING HIGH ON THE AGENDA**

Business continuity and disaster recovery preparations enable a quick resumption of essential functions after a catastrophic event. Key to the plan’s success is increasing the resilience of critical infrastructure, hardware, and applications.

- Initiated efforts to provide infrastructure for alternate site hosting of critical campus services such as eLearning, Campus, and Code Maroon in the event of a catastrophic failure in the campus data centers.

- Enhanced data protection services by implementing an enterprise backup service to replace several smaller or aging systems. This consolidated service allows a consistent business strategy to be applied to critical systems, and provides both onsite and offsite backup services to over 120 client systems.

- Installed enterprise web-based software tools that allow staff to perform planning and review efforts when fully implemented. Living Disaster Recovery Planning System (LDRPS), which uses a relational database that links application, hardware, business process, and infrastructure disaster recovery plans; and Aperture data center management software, which provides monitoring and control of the data center environment.

- Upgraded the electrical and cooling systems in the data centers to meet requirements of more powerful computing equipment, including new servers and a supercomputer. The fiscal year 2009 expenditures for these upgrades totaled $1,156,766.

**FACE TO FACE - VIDEOCONFERENCE INTERACTIVELY LINK ACROSS DISTANCES**

On May 15, 2009, special videoconference connected College Station and Camp Speicher in Iraq for the Texas A&M Air Force ROTC new officer commissioning ceremony. Through the high-quality, two-way audio and video, a U.S. Army colonel stationed in Iraq at the 3rd Infantry Division Multi-National Division administered the commissioning oath to his son, who was being commissioned as an Air Force second lieutenant upon his graduation from Texas A&M.

“We’ve been providing the ability to meet by videoconference to the A&M System for 20 years, and the university’s connections to high-speed networks make these special events possible,” said Tony Hockenberry, Videoconference Coordinator. “This past spring, we produced, in cooperation with the Bush Library and the Texas Education Telecommunications Network, a statewide videoconference for former First Lady Barbara Bush. From the Texas A&M University Presidential Conference Center, Mr. Bush, who is serving as a liaison to her White House years with more than 20,000 elementary school students at 80 Texas schools, all connected by videoconference. Selected students had the opportunity to ask questions of the former First Lady, who talked about friendship, the value of a good education, and the importance of new technology. This year, the Texas A&M University presidential conference center, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, will host another videoconference event to connect former President George H.W. Bush to the students.”

Technological advances will make these special events much more commonplace, according to Mr. Hockenberry, but the personal impact provided by the interactive experience will never be completely diminished.

See the site of thebushlibrary.tamu.edu/events/2009/05/08/EventSummary_7-10-09.html for more information on this year’s videoconference.
**Building Community**

- Support a commitment to community involvement on a campus, a local, state, national, and global basis.
- Expand outreach through telecommunication services to foster and strengthen relationships within and outside the university.

**IT Forum Supports Two-Way Communication**

Texas A&M IT supports the IT Forum (itforum.tamu.edu), which meets monthly to promote communication and information sharing. The forum provides news and updates about IT initiatives and policies; encourages feedback and discussion; and supports responsible practices and services delivery at the university. The past year’s presentation topics ranged from improving university technology to disaster preparedness, risk management, Campus compression, and disaster recovery to special guests speaking on IT and business application architecture.

**IT Advisory Committee Enhances Shared Governance**

Campus IT personnel face many challenges in delivering services and supporting their customers. Gathering perspectives, coordinating efforts, and amassing a collective viewpoint on IT and security-related issues are facilitated by the Information Technology Advisory Committee. The committee promotes shared governance by identifying common IT issues, reviewing and evaluating solutions, and providing recommendations to form policy and operational decisions with the Vice President and Associate Provost for Information Technology.

**Aggieland’s Public Broadcasting Station serves the Community**

KAMU is both a TV station and FM radio station, providing public broadcasting to the Brazos Valley area. It is involved in the academic mission of Texas A&M, from freshman orientation to training for student announcers, operators, and production assistants at the stations.

KAMU produces local Public Television programming and a wide array of academic and outreach videos each year, such as Aggieland, Arts, and LocalFocus. KAMU serves the community events. KAMU-FM broadcasts National Public Radio news, music, and locally produced programs, including local arts events, homeland security topics, health issues, computing tips, and engineering solutions. KAMU also serves as a production resource for national and avoid news outlets, such as National Public Radio, Public Radio International, American Public Media, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and world news outlets, such as National Public Radio, Public Radio International, American Public Media, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and world news outlets, such as National Public Radio, Public Radio International, American Public Media, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and world news outlets, such as National Public Radio, Public Radio International, American Public Media, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and world news outlets, such as National Public Radio, Public Radio International, American Public Media, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and world news outlets, such as National Public Radio, Public Radio International, American Public Media, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and world news outlets, such as National Public Radio, Public Radio International, American Public Media, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and world news outlets, such as National Public Radio, Public Radio International, American Public Media, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and world news outlets, such as National Public Radio, Public Radio International, American Public Media, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and world news outlets, such as National Public Radio, Public Radio International, American Public Media, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and world news outlets, such as National Public Radio, Public Radio International, American Public Media, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and world news outlets, such as National Public Radio, Public Radio International, American Public Media, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and world news outlets, such as National Public Radio, Public Radio International, American Public Media, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and world news outlets, such as National Public Radio, Public Radio International, American Public Media, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and world news outlets, such as National Public Radio, Public Radio International, American Public Media, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and world news outlets, such as National Public Radio, Public Radio International, American Public Media, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and world news outlets, such as National Public Radio, Public Radio International, American Public Media, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and world news outlets, such as National Public Radio, Public Radio International, American Public Media, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and world news outlets, such as National Public Radio, Public Radio International, American Public Media, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and world news outlets.
On September 13, 2008, Hurricane Ike made landfall at Galveston, Texas as a strong Category 2 storm. The resulting damage caused the Texas A&M at Galveston (TAMUG) to the network, enabling faculty, staff, and students to access their data. Texas A&M IT helped establish connection to the College Station campus. Faculty and staff, who were scattered across the region to care for their families, relied on information technology resources to maintain communication and continue operations.

Texas A&M IT staff assisted TAMUG IT counterparts with connecting relocated servers. Robust, redundant high-speed connections facilitated reliable delivery of network services. Also, as hurricane Ike was approaching the Gulf coast, over 200 critical care patients were supported by TAMUG IT personnel provided key support to environmental health and safety with writing, and support available to them through a web site, brochure, and informational booth (iapit.tamu.edu/ito).

Teaching with Technology Conference (fall 2008) - This learning event was attended by educators from across the A&M System.

Supercomputing Facility Users’ Meeting (spring 2009) - The Facility’s 20th anniversary celebration featured speakers from the University of Houston and six Texas A&M departments.

TTN/Annual Conference (spring 2009) - This meeting was attended by enterprise networking and instructional technology staff from the A&M System and TTN affiliates.

Effective communication about IT services to the campus community was conducted through informational campaigns, participation in orientations, and creation of web sites and printed material.

Information Security Awareness Month (October 2008) - The campaign and web site to increase awareness of IT security issues received awards from the International Association of Business Communicators and the ACM Special Interest Group on University and College Computing Services (http://its.tamu.edu/security/).

Code Maroon Enrollment Campaign (spring and summer 2009) - Students and employees were urged to sign up for text message alerts in the new emergency notification system through an extensive campus-wide campaign (codemaroon.tamu.edu).

New Student Conferences (spring and summer 2009) - Presentations to students and parents, online and printed material, and campus service booths helped new Aggies become acquainted with various IT services (it.tamu.edu/files/nscbrochure.pdf).

New faculty Orientation (August 2009) - New faculty learned about the wide range of information technology services, resources, and support available to them through a web site, brochure, and informational booth (iapit.tamu.edu/ito).

Teaching with Technology Newsletter (fall 2008, spring and summer 2009) - Faculty and staff learn about the latest instructional technology news and information.

CONFERENCES AND EVENTS SHARE INFORMATION EFFECTIVELY

Sponsorship of conferences by Texas A&M IT departments promote strengthened relationships within and outside the university.

- Instructional Technology Showcase (fall 2008) - Campus educators presented sessions covering software applications, technology concepts, and innovative methods for enhancing student learning.

- Teaching with Technology Conference (spring 2009) - This learning event was attended by educators from across the A&M System.

- Supercomputing Facility Users’ Meeting (spring 2009) - The Facility’s 20th anniversary celebration featured speakers from the University of Houston and six Texas A&M departments.

- TTN/Annual Conference (spring 2009) - This meeting was attended by enterprise networking and instructional technology staff from the A&M System and TTN affiliates.

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STRENGTHENED WEB PRESENCE IMPROVES IT COMMUNICATION

Web sites are instrumental in effectively and consistently delivering information that people need to understand and use IT services. The re-design of departmental sites was completed this year to provide a cohesive and visually appealing web presence with improved content. The it.tamu.edu site was launched to deliver a comprehensive road map to services provided by Texas A&M IT.

- Texas A&M IT (it.tamu.edu)
- Computing & Information Services (sic.tamu.edu)
- Instructional Technology Services (itsit.tamu.edu)
- Networking & Information Security (nis.tamu.edu)
- Open Access Library (ool.tamu.edu)
- People Web Site Service (people.tamu.edu)
- Software Evaluation and Licensing Library (sell.tamu.edu)
- Supercomputing Facility (sc.tamu.edu)

- Improve Texas A&M IT’s communication by redesigning the Help Desk Central web site and consolidating help documentation currently dispersed across many sites.

- Improve the SSL web site and online software store to facilitate discounted software purchases by A&M System members.

- Continue redesign of IT service sites including sites for Short Courses (shortcourses.tamu.edu) and the IT Solutions & Support Group (itsinfo.tamu.edu).

>> MOVING FORWARD

- Work with the IT Advisory Committee to implement recommendations from the Information Technology Shared Services Team.

- Use messaging tools for specific campus populations for more effective communication. Incorporate social media communication tools such as Twitter for students, and create an informational newsletter for faculty and staff.

- Expand information security awareness year-round including security-themed posters and sponsored crossword puzzles.

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ADVANCING SHARED SERVICES AND COST-SAVING MEASURES

- Develop shared services to reduce costs and maximize efficiencies across the A&M System without sacrificing academic quality.
- Identify and implement cost-saving measures to economize and decrease expenses.

NEW SHARED SERVICES IDENTIFIED TO DECREASE COSTS

The A&M System embarked on a shared services initiative to increase efficiencies and reduce expenses through collaborations and best practices. Special shared services committees created by the Board of Regents were charged with reviewing current services and processes and identifying new opportunities for cost savings without undermining academic standards.

The Technology Information Shared Services Team, chaired by Dr. Pierce Cantrell, made the following recommendations for implementation in fiscal year 2010. These proposals could provide $423,830 per year in savings, $70,000 per year in cost avoidance, and $150,000 for one-time expenses through collaborations and best practices. Special shared services committees created by the Board of Regents were charged with reviewing current services and processes and identifying new opportunities for cost savings without undermining academic standards.

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- Issue a Request for Proposal for one System-wide long distance service provider.
- Expand use of software licensing System-wide through the SELL.
- Implement System-wide participation in shared purchasing of desktop computers.
- Replace the IBM mainframe with a smaller machine.
- Consolidate document management systems.
- Enhance administrative applications such as TrainTraq.

COST-EFFECTIVE SOLUTION

With the Personalized Instructor/Course Appraisal (PICA) system, students evaluate instructors and courses online instead of using paper surveys. In spring 2009, students in more than 1,500 courses at Texas A&M, the Baylor College of Dentistry, and Texas A&M Qatar used PICA to submit end-of-term evaluations. Using the online process is estimated to have saved seven 40-foot trees.

- Students can submit evaluations through the Pica system.
- The system provides data that can be used to make improvements in instructors and courses online instead of using paper forms. In spring 2009, students in more than 1,500 courses at Texas A&M, the Baylor College of Dentistry, and Texas A&M Qatar used PICA to submit end-of-term evaluations. Using the online process is estimated to have saved seven 40-foot trees.

INSTRUCTOR/COURSE EVALUATION SYSTEM PROVIDES A GREEN AND COST-EFFECTIVE SOLUTION

- Student ratings help the campus in selecting teaching award winners. PICA was developed with sponsorship from Measurement and Research Services, the Office of Distance Education, and the Provost’s Office.
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SYSTEM MEMBERS PARTNER FOR IT SERVICES

While new shared service opportunities have been identified, the A&M System successfully shares many IT services today. The annual total budget for major shared IT services is $35.2 million with 36 percent paid by System members other than the Texas A&M University System.

A&M SYSTEM USAGE

Note: Additional shared services are provided by TAMUS Business Computing Services.

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The Workstation Upgrade Program (WUP) is a bulk computer purchase program that establishes standards and achieves savings for the university and participating members of the A&M System. Texas A&M IT staff evaluate desktop manufacturers to find the best machines that are suitable for computer labs and classroom use, and to meet the needs of about 80 percent of campus knowledge workers. Also, the hardware must measure up to a rigorous set of technical criteria for ability to be managed centrally using IT maintenance and security tools. “We use an automated process for installing operating systems, adding software, and making security updates, so we only evaluate business-class machines that are robust enough to meet our standards,” said Wally Strzelec, Senior IT Manager.

The evaluation team consisted of Kevin Davis, Joe Karasek, David Poprik, Greg Polen, and Wally Strzelec.

For fiscal year 2009, the team selected Hewlett-Packard machines. The unit costs for the HP-standard desktop configurations averaged $50 less than last year’s prices. Texas A&M IT coordinated with Procurement Services to offer negotiated prices to other university departments within the A&M System. The program has saved over $1.7 million dollars since its inception in 2007. Over 1,300 Dell units were purchased in the first year of the program and over 1,800 HP units were purchased in the program’s second year. “This program is a great opportunity to cut costs while maintaining the high-quality computing resources that you would expect at a top university,” said Kevin Davis, LAN and Workstation Support Manager. “We hope the program will save even more as the number of people who participate grows.”

BULK COMPUTER PURCHASE PROGRAM CUTS COSTS

BUDGET SUMMARY

TEXAS A&M INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY UNIT EXPENDITURES + CAPITAL FOR FISCAL YEAR 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Expenditures</th>
<th>Capital</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vice President &amp; Associate Provost for IT</td>
<td>$12,353,744</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computing &amp; Information Services</td>
<td>$28,231,070</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educational/Broadcast Services</td>
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<td>Enterprise Information Systems</td>
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<td>Fringe Benefits</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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<td>Travel</td>
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<td>Fringe Benefits</td>
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IMS: $1,745,633
ITS: $1,354,265
VPA: $12,353,744
CIS $26,231,079
Capital $4,080,017
Telecom $12,397,631
Fringe Benefits $3,519,881
Wages $2,668,863
Maintenance & Operations $44,817,192
Travel $318,487
Annual Report 2009
Texas A&M Information Technology

Dr. Pierce Cantrell
Vice President and Associate Provost for Information Technology
Ph. 979.845.2072
tapat.tamu.edu
IT.tamu.edu