



Communicator

Information Technology Division

MIDDLE TENNESSEE

STATE UNIVERSITY



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Professor takes teaching to a new level.
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Second Life Workshops Now Available for Faculty

Created in 2003 by Linden Lab, Second Life is a virtual world where anything is possible.

The program is accessible through the Internet via a special Second Life viewer. Second Life residents are represented “In World” (in Second Life) by avatars, or electronic three-dimensional models. MTSU has established a Second Life Island as of summer 2010.

The island is only assessable to MTSU faculty, staff, and students. You can request access to the island by emailing Brenda Kerr at bkerr@mtsu.edu or Dave Munson at dmunson@mtsu.edu. A website with additional information has also been set up at <http://mtweb.mtsu.edu/secondlife/>.

Teaching in Second Life can be done very simply with very little setup time once students have created avatars and learned the basics of moving around in the virtual world.

Activities that require only a place to hold class (the MTSU Second Life Island) and possibly a microphone include: discussing and debating topics, holding a question-and-answer session, conducting study sessions, practicing foreign languages, and role playing (role playing could require additional work to establish).

Activities requiring a bit more setup time include: displaying class

projects for peer review (art, music, clothing design, etc.); working through case studies; game playing; designing in Second Life (clothing, buildings, interiors, programming scripting); simulating real-life situations (medical cases, crime scenes, museums, books, genetics experiments); presenting (faculty to student or student to class); peer review; performing (music, theatre); studying and applying the physics of virtual worlds and games; using math skills to build buildings and other Second Life items; and training (social workers, psychologists, police, early responders - this may also involve creating simulations).

Members of the Faculty Instructional Technology Center staff have established two workshops in Second Life for MTSU faculty.

The first workshop is an introduction to Second Life for new users. The Second workshop deals with procedures for teaching in Second Life and giving students access to the MTSU Island.

Go to http://www.mtsu.edu/itd/facstaff_train_itd.shtml to sign up.



Office 2010 Sports New Features

Microsoft Office 2010 has been released and here are a few of the changes that you can expect. Here at MTSU, you can't have both Office 2007 (or 2003) and Office 2010 on the same machine. There are just too many complications that arise with having two different versions on the same PC.

If you are used to the new menus in Office 2007, you'll be glad to know that Microsoft hasn't altered them again. The menus are very similar in style and function to its 2007 counterpart with the ribbon button being the primary menu with tabs along the top. The version of Microsoft Office 2010 that will be available at MTSU will continue to give you the same applications that users are accustomed to: Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access, Publisher, OneNote, InfoPath, and Outlook.

The Quick Access Toolbar (QAT) at the top of the program is now fully customizable, unlike the 2007 version. Place the commands you use most often up there for quick availability. Office 2010 will open a plethora of document formats, including those introduced in 2007, .docx, .xlsx, .pptx,

and the popular OpenDocument (*.odt) format that is interchangeable with many other programs. Office 2010 is also fully backward compatible with all older versions of Office documents.

The spelling checker is now integrated with the automatic correction feature.

Microsoft introduced a new feature called Past Preview which provides a live preview before you commit to Paste. This avoids having to use the Undo button.

There are also photo editing tools available in Word 2010, Excel 2010, PowerPoint 2010, Outlook 2010, and Publisher 2010. This feature has been released with limited functionality in previous versions.

Overall, the new Office 2010 contains features that will make things more convenient and easier to use. If you've gotten past the new menu styles, you'll move seamlessly to this newer and more powerful version of one of Microsoft's flagship application suites.

Imaging Goes Paperless

ITD's Administrative Information Systems Services department has been busy adding more processes to the Application Xtender Report Manager (AXRM) module of the Banner Document Management Suite (BDMS).

As mentioned in the last newsletter, AXRM provides the capability to define processes that will locate and extract individual pages from an electronic file and send an image of each page to the appropriate person's record in the BDMS imaging system. Through further definition when setting up the process, the image can even be tied to the appropriate person's record in Banner. All this can be done from the electronic file without users having to print, scan, or index a paper version – truly paperless imaging.

Amazingly, most of the application processes that read and extract the images are not terribly difficult for a developer to define to the system. The main criteria is that the output file has to be consistent from one job execution to the next so that the definition of that image's contents holds true for the process to locate the data it needs for indexing on the virtual page. To date, AISS has worked with Financial Aid to establish eight types of student letters, usually sent via email, to go directly into the BDMS imaging system in this completely automated fashion. Since the letters are sent via email and AXRM captures the image of each letter, at no point does a copy of that email have to be printed and scanned or indexed. AISS has also worked with Advancement Services, Accounting Services, and HR on another seven AXRM processes.

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Changes Come to D2L

The biggest changes to look for in Desire2Learn (D2L) version 9 are the new course development tools called Course Builder and the Interactive Design Wizard.

Collectively, these tools fall under the Course Development Accelerator system which, as you might expect, enable instructors to “accelerate” course development from fundamental lesson plans to full-blown, D2L tool-rich courses. For instructors who have never used D2L, the Course Development Accelerator also provides course development ideas and guides you to the appropriate tools for implementing these ideas.

Course Builder allows you to create and manage all aspects of a D2L course from a central control panel. The

Course Builder central window will automatically populate an existing D2L course’s content, discussions, dropboxes, quizzes, etc., into a visual structure from which instructors can modify their course and launch the appropriate tool (e.g., content, quizzes) for in-depth editing.

Of course, an instructor can also build a brand new course structure using the drag-and-drop tools in Course Builder’s left sidebar and can even use temporary “placeholder” blocks if the instructor hasn’t fully developed a quiz, assignment, or reading.

The Interactive Design Wizard takes D2L course development to a new level by evolving a lesson plan’s learning objectives and behaviors into relevant D2L

material, task, and assessment tools. The Wizard queries instructors, makes tool recommendations, and creates the baseline course structure which can be maintained via Course Builder.

The robust nature of these new tools precludes a word description that can fully address their functionality and benefits. However, you can preview videos of these tools as well as other D2L version 9 enhancements at

<http://www.desire2learn.com/demos/learningenvironment/>.

Additionally, these video links along with other D2L version 9 information are posted in the Content area of the MTSU D2L Learning Community course.

Wireless Signal Strength

As the number of students and faculty continues to increase, so do the numbers of wireless user devices that are connecting to the MTSU wireless network. Wireless technology is continuing to evolve and is being used more often on campus.

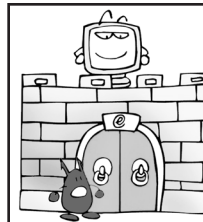
One of the most common questions that arrive from wireless users is about signal strength. Signal strength is exactly what it indicates, the strength of the wireless signal from the wireless access point to a wireless device and the reverse.

The closer in proximity the wireless device is physically located to the wireless access point the stronger the signal strength is between the access point and the wireless device. The signal strength coincides with the data transfer rate between the wireless device and wireless access point.

The stronger the signal strength the higher the data transfer rate. An excellent signal strength can offer from 54

megabytes to a 100MB data transfer rate, and this also depends on the radio technology that is being used. A weak signal will offer poor signal strength and will have data transfer rates down to around 4MB to 10MB, and again it depends on the radio technology being implemented.

The result is the closer a wireless device is located to a access point the stronger the signal strength with high data transfer rates, and the further a wireless device is located from the wireless access point the weaker the signal strength and lower the data transfer rates. Wireless signal strength is affected by more than just distance. Building construction material type and interference from unauthorized Access Points, and other devices can also be a factor. For more information, visit http://www.mtsu.edu/itdnet/wireless_itdnet.shtml.



Security Corner

From the IT Security desk

Passwords control access to protected resources by requiring the user to type in a string of characters in order to access a computer. This verifies that the user is who they say they are because it is something only he or she knows. Common passwords can allow malicious users (and even some viruses) to gain access. Complex passwords containing both uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers, and special characters (\$, *, &, etc) should be used. A general rule is that it should contain at least 8 characters.

For the Love of Teaching

When Middle Tennessee State University associate professor Brenda Parker was tasked with creating two in-lab weekly assignments for one of her computer science classes, she realized it was going to be a tremendous undertaking.

How was she going to keep the labs fresh and engaging without compromising their educational value twice a week?

She looked to instructional technology for a solution.

"I'm hoping to use a lot more different types of technology in this class; however, I will need to explore different types of technology first," Parker said.

Parker witnessed technology's impact on a classroom environment firsthand. She came to MTSU as a math instructor in 1982 and eventually migrated to the Computer Science Department after its inception. Parker has seen many instructional changes through her tenure at MTSU from the use of chalkboards and overhead projectors to Web-based instruction and the use of electronic teaching tools. A major change in her instruction involves the use of Desire-2Learn (D2L) to convey her lessons.

"I've been using D2L ever since the University received it," she said. "There are many effective learning tools available on D2L. Currently, I very seldom distribute handouts in class since almost everything my class is doing is available online."

Parker found that exploring the myriad features on D2L was a daunting task on to itself, so she successfully applied for an Instructional Technologies Development Committee (ITDC) grant that will allocate the time she needs to not only research the intricacies of D2L, but examine other facets of eLearning that can be potentially incorporated into her curriculum such as the use of clickers.

The ITDC is an organization that provides funding recommendations to the Information Technology Division for fall and spring semester grant projects



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related to the innovative and effective integration of technology into teaching and learning.

"One of the main reasons I applied for this grant was to give me the opportunity to learn more about D2L," she explained. "Each time I log onto D2L I

to capitalize on is the competencies and rubrics tool that will enable her to gauge her students' progress.

"I need to set up learning objectives for my labs and then establish some kind of rubric that will let me know if the students are learning what they are expected to learn," she explained.

Parker, who holds both a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in mathematics from MTSU and a master's degree in computer science from Vanderbilt University, is determined to use eLearning to create an effective classroom experience for her students.

"I have a drive for teaching," she said. "I love to see students achieve their goals, grow, and develop. I'm very excited that I was able to receive the grant

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realize there's more that I could do with it. This grant will give me the time I need to work with D2L and learn other ways to improve my teaching skills and improve student learning with the use of technology. There's just so much new technology available."

One such D2L feature Parker hopes

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Brenda Parker

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because it will give me an opportunity to work on those labs and learn better methods for introducing technology in the classroom. Anytime you can do things with students where they enjoy it and actively participate, I feel they learn more effectively.”

The incorporation of technology into Parker’s courses has been mutually beneficial for several parties. The professor embraces it because it helps her maintain her courses more efficiently, her students have warmed up to the technology because it’s convenient and engaging, and trees love it because it saves paper.

“D2L has been a big help for me,” Parker said. “It has made life so much simpler. You don’t have to worry about printing things out; so there is no more need for handouts or distributing grades on a piece of paper. My students have accepted D2L quite well because it enables them to keep up with their assignments and grades. Sometimes I may forget when an assignment is due, but the schedule on D2L is available online, so students always know when assignments are due. You can use these tools to help you be a better teacher.”

Elearning also yields its fair share of challenges, Parker noted.

“Because technology changes so rapidly, after developing online materials you may be required to redo materials the following year,” she said. “In our field we often change programming, languages and how we use the computer.”

Parker also has to explore the best methodologies in which to use technology in her classes. In order to accomplish that feat, she needs to allocate time to research these methods.

“I need to develop two labs per week, and that’s taking a lot of time,” she said. “I knew that was going to be a tremendous task, so that’s why I applied for the grant. I want the labs to be effective and I want the students to enjoy what they are studying.”

In the long run Parker believes the hard work pays off because the use of technology enables her to be a more effective instructor. It also allows her students to learn in different ways, both visually and audibly.

“Anything I can do to offer my students a variety of learning experiences, will help me to be a better teacher and as a result, hopefully, aid my students in learning and retaining information,” she said.

Telephone Tidbits



Most 615 area code numbers do not require 1+ (10 digit) dialing. Try dialing any 615 area code number as a local (7 digit) number first to avoid unnecessary long distance charges. Incorrectly dialing a local number as a long distance number will incur long distance charges.

Network Services Update

New and replaced equipment installations include:

Airport, Ezell, Stark Ag, Wright Music Building, KUC 3rd floor, Cope Administration Building, Forrest Hall, ROTC Annex, Print Shop, Tom Jackson Building, Peck Hall, Vocational Agriculture, and the College of Education.

Fiber Ring Update

The campus conduit and fiber infrastructure has been expanded to allow for additional redundant circuits.

Wireless Update

New wireless access points were installed for enhanced coverage at the James E. Walker Library, room 346; Davis Science Building, room 121; and at the Business and Aerospace Building, S326.

Breaking Barriers



As the Associate Vice President for the Information Technology Division, Tom Wallace is tasked with the division's daily operations such as maintaining communication with the institution constituencies to establish needs, requirements, and schedules for division resources.

Back during the days when Tom Wallace taught college level mathematics, he thrived on what he described as those "a-ha moments."

Such instances occurred when Wallace was able to make a breakthrough to a student who might have been struggling with the material beforehand.

"It's when a student finally got it," he reflected. "I enjoyed seeing my students succeed and go on to finish their degrees and move on. It was really rewarding."

Even though his teaching days are behind him, Wallace still enjoys those "a-ha moments."

"Throughout my career I've really enjoyed working with people, trying to find solutions to the problems they face," he said. "Whether it's a student

in a classroom who's struggling with math or, in this role as Associate Vice President, if there's an email problem or something to that effect, I try to find solutions that work for everybody. Those are the challenges I've always liked to pursue."

Information Technology Division **STAFF**

As the Associate Vice President for the Information Technology Division, Wallace is tasked with the division's daily operations such as maintaining communication with the institution constituencies to establish needs, requirements, and schedules for division resources.

The Delaware native's tenure at

MTSU began after serving 16 years at Volunteer State Community College as its Director of Administrative Computing. He started as a full-time adjunct math instructor for three years before serving as a tenure-track instructor for a year.

In addition, Wallace served on a host of TBR system-wide committees and working groups such as the IT Sub-council, ERP (Banner) RP Development, Evaluation and Banner Contract Development Committee; and the TETLE (Desire 2 Learn) RFP Development, and Evaluation and Contract Negotiation Committees.

"In my role at Vol State I facilitated a lot of projects, not only IT projects but building projects as well," he added. "So I learned a lot about how

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ITD Staff News

Vice President and Chief Information Officer **Bruce Petryshak** and Associate Vice President **Tom Wallace** recently attended the CIO's IT Sub-Council meeting at Montgomery State Park. **Toney Flack** and **Lorenzo Hines** joined them on the second day for an all day virtualization showcase for IT leaders.

Statistical consultant **Toto Sutarso** recently co-authored several articles for publication. He collaborated with Mark H. Anshel on "The Effect of a Storyboarding Technique on Selected

Measures of Fitness Among University Employees," which was published in *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*; "Conceptualizing maladaptive sport perfectionism as a function of gender," which was accepted for publication in the *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*; and he co-authored "Whoever Loves Money is Never Satisfied with His or Her Pay: Income and CPI as Moderators" with Thomas Li-Ping Tang, Mahfooz A. Ansari, and Ilya Garber, et al. As a statistical consultant, Toto works with faculty members, graduate students, and administrative staff on research projects that require statistical analysis.

Senior systems analysts **Eve Jones**, **Phyllis Kitzler**, and **Mary Smith** attended the annual SunGard Summit in March. The event, which was held in New Orleans, Louisiana, drew more than 6,000 attendees and featured a presentation by renowned broadcast journalist Cokie Roberts. The annual event also provided access to over 600 sessions and 50 exhibitors. The four-day conference focused on teaching and learning, advancement, enrollment management, strategy, administration, and information technology.

Tom Wallace

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buildings were constructed, especially when it came to IT systems within the buildings."

Wallace's experience at Vol State paved the way for his arrival at MTSU in 2006 as ITD's technology projects director, where he worked as a liaison between ITD and campus planning.

In the spring of 2008, Wallace was promoted to his current position, where he helps facilitate the services that ITD provides to the University's students, faculty, and staff.

Wallace said there is never really a typical day on his calendar. His workdays consist of tactical and strategic planning to generate more of those precious "a-ha moments."

"You don't want to just put out fires all the time," he said. "You've got to be looking ahead, you've got to be planning, and you've got to put time into your work and lay out a path to the future. At the same time, you can't stop operating to do that, so you've got to fight fires as well. And

sometimes it's the firefighting that helps you plan – to learn about the opportunities you have."

Wallace communicates daily with division directors for operational and project status updates and is responsible for the areas of computer system support, computer operations, classroom technology, and micro-computing support, as well as the local service providers assigned to colleges.

"I see my job as a service role, serving not only the folks who work with me at ITD but also the University itself," he explained. "I try to find solutions and applications for how technology can make life better here on campus."

In addition, Wallace performs the duties of the division security officer and directs the division in the absence of the chief information officer.

"I enjoy working with people to help find them solutions in all levels of the University," he added.

One of Wallace's biggest challenges consists of allocating the appropriate amount of time for his numerous projects while overcoming what he

describes as "barriers" to progress, whether they represent a lack of familiarity, communication, or trust.

"I really believe success happens when you develop a relationship with people where there is mutual trust and everyone is working toward the same goal," he said. "The barriers must be broken down to the point where we work and support one another cooperatively. Ultimately, that is my goal – to break down those kinds of barriers."

Wallace holds both a bachelor's and a master's degree in mathematics from David Lipscomb University and Tennessee Technological University, respectively. He earned an athletic scholarship in college as a competitive gymnast.

Wallace currently resides in Lebanon with his wife of 31 years, Sherrie, and is heavily involved with his church. He is a certified Red Cross Emergency Shelter manager and works with several other charities including Habitat for Humanity. His son, Adam, is a freshman at Goodpasture High School, and his daughter, Emily, is a graduate of Lipscomb University.

Avaya Demo Lab Coming Soon

Avaya and MTSU have agreed to establish a telecommunications demonstration lab on campus for Avaya products and services. MTSU has used the Avaya product line (previously called Lucent Technologies) since 1999 to serve the voice communication needs of the campus.

The demonstration lab will be equipped with the latest voice, data, and video communication products available and gives MTSU the chance to experiment with the latest collaboration-enabled technologies as soon as they are available. MTSU is one of

four universities selected to participate in the demonstration lab project. This opportunity also allows MTSU to work with the other universities regularly to discover new and innovative ways to use the products and services. Additionally, development tools will be available to allow students, faculty, and staff to work on special projects or develop integrated, communications-enabled applications.

The latest offering for the Avaya product line now includes touch screen tablet devices with multi-modal capabilities, including voice, video, and IM conferencing capabilities (See

YouTube video at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KW_uzYiquug). Examples of the range of phones and video devices available are set up in the MTSU Telecommunications Building and allow users to get direct hands-on experience.

The demonstration lab will also be used to showcase the portfolio for current and potential Avaya customers who are interested in implementing the latest communication technologies in use at MTSU and available from Avaya.

ITD Workshops Available For Faculty And Staff

Get started with computer graphic programs such as Illustrator; edit and enhance pictures with Photoshop; get familiar with D2L and Photoshop; get trained in Word, Excel, and Access; learn to design Web pages; and more!

Registration is required (except where noted).

- **Register on the Web or call ITD at x5345.**
- **Most workshops are offered at the ITD Training Center in the Telecommunication Building.**
- **Classes are filled on a first-come, first-served basis.**
- **Please give a 24-hour cancellation notice.**

Individual consultation for instructional technology needs can be requested by calling ext. 8189. Other workshops are available upon request.

See our website for more information at

www.mtsu.edu/~itd/workshops