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No summer break for tech support team

James Copeland, left, ITD assistant director, Classroom Technology, and Spencer Arnold, student assistant, work on installing a new 98-inch video screen in a dance studio at Murphy Center.

During the summer the pace slows down for many people, but it picks up for ITD’s Classroom Technology & Support and Desktop Support team.

That is when their annual race against time begins to replace and upgrade computers, update software, and do inventory and improvements in classrooms across campus, said Alan Franklin, director, Client Services.

In addition, the classroom/desktop team has been:

• Converting printers/copiers from Pharos to Uniflow in faculty and staff offices across campus in order to consolidate the campus print management system on one software program.

ITD help big plus in online math course project

When longtime MTSU math professor Rebecca Calahan needed to develop an online course template, she found the ITD Instructional Support Team to be a huge plus.

“While I have used online homework sites in many of my courses, online course teaching and learning is new for me,” said Calahan, who has taught at MTSU for 28 years.

See Calahan, page 8
Accessibility resources easily accessible to faculty

As the fall semester begins, take some time to review all the accessibility resources that are easily accessible for you as a faculty or staff member.

Accommodation requests should begin with the student contacting the MTSU Disability & Access Center. Then instructors work with the DAC and student on whatever accommodation plan is needed, such as changes in classroom arrangement or test-taking procedures.

The following webpage is a great first stop for students, providing links to DAC and numerous other resources, including the Adaptive Technology Center: www.mtsu.edu/dac/index.php.

As you work with the DAC and students on accessible quizzes and resources, get some great ideas and advice at mtsu.edu/ait/accessibility/index.php.

Remember that many of the programs you work with every day are now loaded with accessibility features, including:

- Microsoft Word documents mtsu.edu/ait/accessibility/word_accessibility.php
- Adobe PDF mtsu.edu/ait/accessibility/pdf_accessibility.php
- PowerPoint mtsu.edu/ait/accessibility/powerpoint_accessibility.php
- And audiovisual mtsu.edu/ait/accessibility/audio_video.php

Most software has built-in accessibility checkers, including Microsoft Word and PowerPoint. Also, Desire2Learn (D2L) has several features that can help in your accommodation plan, including online quizzes and audio feedback tools.

Learn more about D2L's accessibility tools at www.mtsu.edu/ait/accessibility/d2l_accessibility.php.

For assistance in classroom accessibility, contact the FITC at 615-904-8189 or itdacad@mtsu.edu.

Banner 9 is now available to all account holders on campus

Banner 9 was made available to all MTSU Banner account holders in June 2019.

Prior to that time, administrative offices that have Banner Team Leads had been using Banner 9 concurrently with Banner 8 to find any issues that needed to be addressed by ITD or by Ellucian or TBR.

MTSU links to Banner 8 will be removed as soon as the Ellucian consultant to TBR provides fixes on a few outstanding issues.

As noted in previous Communicator articles and in campus emails, what used to be referred to as INB are now referred to as Banner Admin Pages, which are web-based pages that have the same info on them as the old Banner 8 Oracle INB forms.

This means no need for Java on your client machine.

Also with Banner 9, you can use other browsers besides Internet Explorer, such as Chrome, Firefox, Safari, and MS Edge. When using Chrome, Incognito mode is often helpful.

PipelineMT and its menu options (which is really Self-Service Banner) hasn’t changed yet because of Banner 9. But it will—ITD’s work to develop new Banner 9 replacement menu options in PipelineMT has begun.

Watch for updates in upcoming Communicator articles.

Banner 9 training resources can be found at mtsu.edu/itd-enterprise/banner-training.php. If you would be interested in a future training workshop, email James.Foster@mtsu.edu.
Tech team, continued from Page 1

- Upgrading most University computer lab PCs from Windows 7 to Windows 10 operating systems.
- Working on annual rotation of faculty and staff computers based on work orders or age of the machines.
- Inspecting all classrooms throughout the year to make sure all equipment in the inventory is present and working.

A new role has been consulting on construction of the new College of Behavioral and Health Sciences building, set to open in fall 2020. The $39.6 million, 91,000-square-foot building will house the departments of criminal justice administration, psychology, and social work, including faculty offices, classrooms, and laboratory space.

They have bi-monthly construction meetings to review the progress and inspect construction to make sure it is compatible with technology infrastructure such as speakers and antennas. Next summer the IT and A/V workload at that new building will increase even more, said James Copeland, assistant director, Classroom Technology.

“Much of the team's focus is on projects funded by Student Technology Access Fees. TAF funds are required to be spent in the year collected. In 2017-18 that totaled nearly $4.4 million. The key to winning the summertime race against time is a group of five student workers, Copeland said.

“They are really like full-blown employees—they do everything we do, which is really a good resume builder,” Copeland said, adding that the he began his IT career in a similar student worker role.

This year that includes 11 classroom upgrades—double what has been done in past years, he said.

“That involves taking out all the technology in a classroom—all of the old equipment—and replacing it,” Copeland said. “The big thing is we’re moving from low-quality video to high definition, switching to digital signals.”

Several classes in BAS were upgraded with built-in cameras and microphones for use with Panopto software that records classroom sessions for use on Desire2Learn (D2L) and online courses. Franklin said other classes have received 86-inch Interactive Flat Panel touch screens—described as “giant iPads”—with 4K video resolution.

And two classrooms were upgraded with 98-inch screens—one in the Bragg Building for the College of Media and Entertainment, and one in Murphy Center for the Department of Dance.

The student workers start out shadowing the full-time ITD staff but later can work on their own, responding to work orders in classrooms.

“There is no spare moment . . . They are on their feet the entire shift, working every summer and every break,” Copeland said. “A lot of people think we have the summer off, and sometimes people are surprised that our student workers work through Christmas break or spring break.”

One student employee, junior computer science major Spencer Arnold, said working with the classroom and desktop team is convenient and beneficial for his future.

“You can’t really get software programming work while in college, so this gives you a reputable base of experience in IT and audiovisual, which is an industry that is really coming together,” said Arnold, who has done the part-time work for over a year now.

For information on TAF, including how to recommend projects, visit www.mtsu.edu/taf/.

“A lot of people think we have the summer off, and sometimes people are surprised that our student workers work through Christmas break or spring break.”

James Copeland, assistant director, Classroom Technology

Spencer Arnold, left, student assistant, and James Copeland, ITD assistant director for Classroom Technology, work on installation of new A/V equipment in a dance at Murphy Center. Arnold is one of five student workers who help with upgrades throughout the year.
ITD Staff News

Burks continues MTSU career with ITD position

Amy B. Burks began working as an Information Technology specialist for ITD in June.

Burks grew up in Murfreesboro and now lives in Readyville, Tennessee. She graduated from MTSU in 1996 with a bachelor’s degree in mathematics and minors in computer science and agriculture. She earned a master’s degree in education in 2004.

She began working at MTSU as a freshman student assistant in the Records Office in 1992 and recalls getting assistance from the Office of Information Technology, now ITD.

“I thoroughly enjoyed working on campus and hoped that one day I would have the opportunity to assist students in the same way that the Records Office and OIT had assisted me,” she said. “My first full-time campus employment opportunity was working as a computer technician for the library when it was housed in the Todd Building and later migrated to the new James E. Walker Building from 1997-1999.”

She worked in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, for a few years, then moved back to Tennessee Adaptive Technology Coordinator in Disabled Student Services (DSS) from 2002-2012. At ATC she began working in the classroom side of higher education.

She taught Adaptive/Assistive Technology in Special Education (SPED 4280 and SPED 5280) as an adjunct faculty member from 2006-2011. From there she began working at the James E. Walker Library as a technology assistant from 2012-2019.

“I am so excited to be a part of the ITD team, for this team left a long lasting positive impression that pushed me to become the computer support guru that I am today. I hope to become a strong contributing member to my new team and influence our campus computing environment in the most positive way. I am truly blessed, and MTSU will always be near and dear to my heart,” she said.

At ITD she provides support within the College of Media and Entertainment.

Away from work she enjoys horseback riding, working on or at the barn, kayaking, riding motorcycles/four wheelers, gardening, and working in the yard.

“One horse is named Oreo (AKA Big ‘O’) and he is a great mountain horse. We trail ride a couple times a week,” she said. Burks also has four dogs she calls her “fur babies.”

Oldham is new IT specialist

Clay Oldham joined ITD in July as an IT Specialist.

Oldham, originally from Starkville, Mississippi, earned a bachelor’s degree in History with a minor in Political Science from Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee.

“I started in IT in 2013 at Blue Layer IT, a managed service provider in Lubbock Texas. They taught me a lot there, and I worked my way up from an onsite technician to a level 2 support technician,” he said.

His wife, Assistant Professor Rebecca Oldham, is a faculty member in the MTSU Human Sciences Department.

“We have a 3-year-old son, Charlie, who loves waking up too early, eating nothing but bread, and singing Queen’s ‘Under Pressure’ on repeat. We’re loving MTSU and Murfreesboro and are very excited to be here,” Oldham said.

His hobbies include Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and movies.

“Rebecca and I are huge Marvel nerds, so superhero movies are on a lot in our house. Charlie’s favorite is ’Spider-Man.’ We’re also excited to do more camping now that we’re living closer to mountains.”

He said living in Murfreesboro is the final part of the full Tennessee experience for the couple.

“Rebecca and I went to school in West Tennessee, and we lived in Knoxville before moving to Texas. So this move to Murfreesboro means we’ve lived in all three stars of the TN flag,” he said of the three-star symbol representing the three geographic areas of the state.

Tech handbook available online

A digital copy of the 2019-20 Faculty and Staff Information Technology Handbook is available online. Visit www.mtsu.edu/itd/ and click on News & Publications. A link to the PDF is under the Information Technology Handbook header.
Barton has had varied IT career and rewarding theater role

Michael Barton's IT resume might be one of the most diverse you've ever seen, including working for an international law firm, an online video dating service, and an Ivy League college.

But it's what Barton, ITD director of Enterprise Server Services, volunteered to do for many years that gets him most animated.

It is his time on the theater stage. Or, rather, building them.

Born and raised in Ohio, Barton earned a degree in computer science from Ohio University, then worked in a series of IT jobs in the Philadelphia area. That included IT networking at Baldwin Wallace College near Cleveland, Ohio, then for a pharmaceutical company, a law firm with offices worldwide, and Hahnemann University Hospital.

Then there was the stint doing network administration for a video dating service.

"That's where I really learned about client confidentiality," he said.

From there he worked for Aon Insurance before going back to the college environment at Princeton University. He worked in IT at the Ivy League college for nearly 18 years, toward the end moving more into security, data protection, and identity management.

Then about four years ago he and his wife, Nancy, felt the need to move to Tennessee to help care for her parents, who had retired in the Nashville area. His father-in-law has since passed away.

Barton joined ITD at MTSU in November 2016.

The Bartons have a large extended family. Nancy is one of nine children, and Barton is one of six siblings.

"Family reunions get to be pretty big," he said.

They have one son, Zachary, who lives in New York and is an accomplished pianist. When Zachary was growing up, he was involved in theater productions at a performing arts school in Trenton, New Jersey, Barton said.

The school put on elaborate stage productions of shows including “Les Mis,” “Beauty and the Beast,” “Suessical,” and “Peter Pan” just to name a few.

Barton soon found himself helping design and build sets and props and doing other backstage support, and he loved it. They built a cruise ship deck for “Anything Goes” and a courtroom for “Inherit the Wind.”

“I made Peter Pan fly. . . . We built some pretty elaborate sets. If there's a hobby I have it's doing that. I really enjoyed it.”

Michael Barton, ITD director of Enterprise Server Services

ITD director of Enterprise Server Services Michael Barton has had a long and varied IT career. He also enjoyed volunteering as a set designer and builder for theater productions at his son's school.

“This was a lot of fun. Over the nine years I was helping them out, we did 27 stage productions,” Barton said. “‘Peter Pan’ was one of the best. I made Peter Pan fly. We hung her on a wire and flew her across the stage.

“These were pretty big shows. We built some pretty elaborate sets. If there's a hobby I have it's doing that. I really enjoyed it.”

As for his career, it slowly changed over the years from database administration to the IT security field, which is what he has focused on at MTSU. In those nearly three years, he has helped with a series of security initiatives including Multi-factor Authentication, Microsoft Skype for Business programs, and Single Sign-On.

The move toward increased security and improved convenience are in some ways conflicting, but can each be accomplished, he said.

“Single Sign-On is great, but it doesn't amount to a hill of beans for security. If you want Single Sign-On you want MFA. You don't want to put everything behind just a single password," Barton said. "You have to just keep being a moving target.”

Other projects have included a new e-faxing system and migrating email off-campus to the Cloud.

The Bartons enjoy kayaking on local waterways and traveling. They recently returned from an Alaska tour and cruise, and last year went to Yellowstone National Park.

They attend Saint Rose of Lima Catholic Church in Murfreesboro.
Tech Tips & Tricks: Help for when spam becomes scam

Junk emails universally described as “spam” make up an estimated 45% of all email.

We are awash in unnecessary, unrequested, and often poorly written mail. The sheer volume of email can lead us to be careless and frustrated as we sift this flood of emails for those that are important.

Hidden in the flow like bait are scam emails.

Scams make up less than 3% of email, but that percentage is growing. Falling for these fake emails can lead to more than just embarrassment—you can be subject to real financial loss, so it pays to know the signs of a scam email.

How to recognize a scam email

The list below is not exhaustive but will be useful. Some of the tips may feel like common sense; others less so. Use them as a whole to help identify the scams. Watch out for:

▶ Tip 1: Suspicious display names and email addresses

Display names in emails cannot be trusted. Scammers like to “spoof” display names that you might trust. Look at the display name, but also look at the email address that it is coming from. If that address looks strange or unprofessional, you should be on your guard.

▶ Tip 2: Spelling mistakes and bad grammar

In a world where spellcheck is ubiquitous, it is absurd but true that scam emails will often have bad grammar and misspelled words. But thankfully they do, so this is another indicator of a scam.

▶ Tip 3: Requests for personal information

Legitimate institutions such as MTSU will not ask you for your personal information by email. The University has much more secure ways to receive it. Never give up personal credentials by email.

▶ Tip 4: Urgent language

Emails that claim you are going to lose access unless you respond right away or that you must click on a link below should be avoided. This is just a tactic socially engineered to convince you to give up information.

▶ Tip 5: Unsolicited Job offers

This one may seem obvious, but if you receive a job offer by email that you did not apply for, you should not trust it.

Keep track of your resumes and if you did not apply for that job be cautious. I refer you back to tip 3—don’t give up your personal information through email.

▶ Tip 6: Missing, incomplete signature line

With scam emails you will find a lack of contact information in the signature line. Legitimate businesses will always provide contact details at the bottom of their emails.

When you receive a scam email what should you do?

Typically the best course of action is to delete the email and go on. If you receive a scam email to your MTSU account you can forward that email to abuse@mtsu.edu.

Forwarding the email lets us evaluate them, block those that we can, and inform others that may not be as informed about scam emails.

Outlook Help

You can also use Outlook to filter out emails from a certain address or domain name, once you determine it is a scam. Right click on a message and select Junk from the drop-down menu. That will bring up the option to automatically block emails from that address or domain.

It also gives you the option to filter all junk email at various levels. You might take a peek into the Junk folder every once in a while to make sure you don’t have legitimate emails, or perhaps to forward some of them to the above address for evaluation and warnings.

But forward them only, do not respond, open any attachments, or click into any links. For help with email or other issues, contact the Help Desk at 615-898-5345 or email at help@mtsu.edu.
Desire to learn or increase D2L skills? Help always available

Have you used Desire2Learn (D2L) for years but not tried some of the features due to uncertainty?
Or have you never used D2L and would like to try it to improve efficiency in testing, grading, and communicating with your students?

Faculty in both of those categories attended a series of D2L workshops held in August as the start of the fall semester approached. Taught by Jimmy Williams and Jan Pontia from ITD, these sessions covered the quizzing, gradebook, rubrics, discussion, and other features of D2L.

One of the participants was Prof. Kyle Butler of the College of Education, who teaches a master’s degree program for licensing. Butler said he wanted to learn more features of D2L to help his program move toward a “hybrid format” with classroom and online offerings. They also moved the non-licensure master’s program to entirely online, he said.

“What I’m trying to do is better understand the platform and what’s possible. I’ve used D2L in my classes already just as a supplement, but I haven’t used it to the full extent that I think is possible,” Butler said. “So the main reason is to see what all the tools are, to better inform us on how we could possibly move to a hybrid and online format and still protect quality.”

One feature that was showcased during the recent workshops was setting up and grading D2L quizzes. Williams, academic/instructional technology specialist, said once you master the tools for creating various types of questions, D2L quizzes can be quickly created and automatically graded and recorded in your D2L gradebook.

One exception is long answer or essay-type questions, which have to be subjectively graded. But in that case the rest of the test can be automatically graded, and the instructor only has to read and grade the essay-type answers separately.

Tests can import questions from databases, or from previous exams created on D2L, saving even more time.
Questions can be weighted for different points and randomized or shuffled to make sure all students don’t receive the same version. A D2L version of a quiz can be a possible alternative for a student who has worked with the Disability and Access Center on an accommodation request, such as a digital version of a test.

All D2L materials are accessible with tools used by visually impaired students, Williams said.

D2L created quizzes can be offered online with a long timeframe for completion, or can be given during a class time and collected at the end. Security features include the ability to set a password for access, or making the test available only for a certain period of time, he said.

Pontia, instructional technology specialist, focused on the Dropbox feature, which provides access to student assignments from anywhere you have a computer. It has feedback options, including audio and video clips.

Williams also discussed the Discussions feature, which allows instructors to create, manage, and even grade discussions of topics from classroom sessions or subject matter from attachments, weblinks, and video clips.

D2L Boot Camp materials are available at: www.mtsu.edu/ait/D2L/bootcamp.php. To request individual instruction, email itdacad@mtsu.edu.

Prof. Kyle Butler of the College of Education asks a question during a recent D2L training session on quizzes.

Jimmy Williams, ITD academic/instructional technology specialist, teaches a recent workshop on how to maximize the benefits of D2L in the classroom.
"Part of my motivation to engage in online teaching and online course design is that it offers me the opportunity to learn something new in my profession. It seems like there is always something new to learn in instructional technology," Calahan said.

“We have an excellent instruction support team in ITD. They offer many training opportunities and are always willing to work on an individual basis.”

She said that when a colleague retired last year, she accepted the role of Course Lead Designer for MATH 1010 Mathematics for General Studies.

“The course needed to be updated from when it was first taught in 2009. I also wanted to set up a course shell for other instructors assigned to teach the course," Calahan said.

So she turned to the LT&ITC course redesign team to help present existing materials in new digital methods through Desire2Learn (D2L).

“The mathematical content of the course is determined by the mathematics department and is existing course material. The graphic elements and the D2L course layout is new and was determined by what I wanted to accomplish in the redesign along with suggestions from the design team and the Online Faculty Mentor,” she said. The process involved meeting with the full design team twice—at the beginning of the project and at the end. She also had continuing and extensive contact with members throughout the development process.

While MATH 1010 has been offered as an online course since 2009, the goal of the revision process was to create a MATH 1010 Online Course Shell to be made available to instructors. The revised online MATH 1010 has been taught for two semesters, and this semester she is assisting a new instructor with using the course shell.

“There are several components of the online course that will be incorporated into my classroom course on D2L. This semester is the first time that the department has offered two sections of Online MATH 1010,” Calahan said.

One major improvement is the incorporation of the videos that introduce each module topic, she said. They are made by MTSU instructors and serve to connect the student more to MTSU. Discussion Boards have been put into the course along with two writing assignments.

“One of the design team members helped with adding a final exam course review in a quiz format," she said.

The final course was evaluated and approved by Online Faculty Mentor English Prof. Aleka Blackwell. Carol Hayes, coordinator for Distance Education Faculty Services, was not on the design team but provided guidance with the overall process and documentation.

On the ITD side, she credited Scott Haupt, ITD instructional design specialist, with advising on course layout and design as well as pedagogical improvements. Bill Burgess, former ITD accessibility specialist, reviewed it for accessibility issues.

Kourtney Smith, ITD learning multimedia developer, produced the “excellent videos that add a very nice visual component,” Calahan said.

"Being a part of a design team makes the process less intimidating and more interesting. The process has motivated me to start a new online course development for our Precalculus math course.

Calahan earned a master’s degree in math at MTSU and a doctorate in Applied Math at Auburn University. She has taught graduate and undergraduate courses at MTSU and has served as the graduate teaching assistant supervisor, department general education coordinator, and supervisor of the Mathematics Calculus Tutoring Lab.

In her experience, even students who love math can find it “intimidating.”

“Online learning allows for opportunity to express doubts and fears about the subject. Some students are more at ease with talking math or asking for help through discussion boards, emails, and phone calls,” she said.

Student responses to the new course have been overwhelmingly positive, she said.

"In working with the design team, my goal changed from making the course better to making it a top-notch online course. The technical and pedagogical assistance that I received from the Faculty Instructional Technology Center and an Instructional Design Specialist guaranteed a sound final product," she said.

Interested in course redesign? Contact the Lucinda Lea Learning, Teaching and Innovative Technologies Center at 615-494-7671 or by email at ltanditc@mtsu.edu. For more information visit mtsu.edu/ltanditc/index.php.