



Information
Technology



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Annual Report 2021

Inaugural IT Report

The past academic year has been unlike any other. It was the year of distance and remoteness. Faculty, staff, and students had to learn entirely new ways of doing things. Information technology was tasked with making part of the shift occur - to enable remote and hybrid learning, to enable offices to stay open virtually and process paperwork digitally, to enable students to access the resources of the university, to continually provide new answers to new questions, and to provide a new, technological platforms for student, faculty, and staff interaction and collaboration. It was a scenario that went beyond anything IT had faced before.

The work within IT and at the campus was only possible with a great team of collaborative partners. The University Senate's Information Technology Committee (ITC) has been instrumental this year in its support, leadership, and assistance to the university. The Center for Teaching and Innovation (CTI) was also vitally important, as many of the new initiatives in teaching and learning had their roots in projects the CTI was already undertaking. The Applications Coordinating Team (ACT) made sure that as we enabled services, such as physical mail scanning, the data would be secure, encrypted, and protected. Every member of IT, the ITC, ACT, and the CTI played a role in confronting and overcoming the challenges of this year. From pre-planning "what if" meetings to inventing technology "drive-throughs," the university relied on its technology leadership groups for solutions. As remote-learning and remote-working became the new normal, these groups continued training, problem-solving, and adapting for a hybrid and online Fall '20 and Spring '21 semester. It was truly a team effort. To give thanks to all the groups that worked together this academic year, IT presents here its first annual report. We are doing so, moreover, to coincide with the last annual meeting of the ITC to acknowledge that a good many of the past year's issues have been raised and addressed in—or as a result of—ITC meetings.

As the institution looks to return to a post-COVID "new normal," it does so with the awareness that any "restoration" of past practices will be informed by recent experiences to produce something altogether new—what we used to do will be reimagined and reconfigured by all that has been learned in the past year. The coming years will be neither like the past year nor like the years that preceded it, but an entirely new amalgamation. Our task, then, is to learn from this past year in order to cull out from the ad hoc and provisional what are positive institutional, procedural, and technological changes worth adopting on a more permanent basis. Accordingly, the IT leadership teams recognize that they must not simply be restorative but also transformative as we return to regular operations. Specifically, IT will be:

- Rescaling where appropriate
- Reinventing as required
- Returning to baseline where it makes sense
- Reducing to optimize
- Recognizing what is no longer relevant

Finally, as Chief Information Officer, I want to personally thank all the teams and divisions of the university—the ITC, ACT, the CTI, Operations & Facilities, COVID teams, and the Executive Team among many others—who came together to overcome all the challenges of this academic year. I also especially want to thank every single person working in IT. Some of them may be unknown to the general university community, but every one of them gave all that they had to give so that CCSU technology could stay operational. This is my public thanks to them and this report shows the achievements of this group and it's university partners coming together in a time of need.



George F. Claffey, Jr.

Information Technology

George F. Claffey Jr.
Chief Information Officer

Kevin Brassard
Deputy CIO &
Chief Information Security Officer

Amy Kullgren
Director of Client Support

Sean McNickle
Director of Technology Operations

Chris Simcik
Director, Administrative Technology Services

Stan Styrzczula
Director of IT Strategic Initiatives

Tina Rivera
Associate Director of IT Strategic
Initiatives and Projects

Center for Teaching & Innovation (CTI)

Christina Robinson
Associate Vice President for Graduate
Studies, Research, and Faculty Development

Jennifer Niccoletti
Director of Instructional Design and Distance
Learning

Faculty Senate Information Technology Committee (ITC) Leadership

Stuart Barnett (English)
Chair

Thomas Burkholder (Chemistry &
Biochemistry)
Vice-Chair

Lisa Washko
Secretary

Applications Coordinating Team (ACT) Leadership

Thomas King
Co-Chair

Stan Styrzczula
Co-Chair

New IT Website

Technology needs were front and center throughout our campus closure due to COVID-19. As such, more and more faculty, staff, and students were looking to our IT website for information and answers they needed for effective remote work, teaching, and learning. The feedback we received allowed us to recognize the need to update our website with our audience in mind. Our IT website has been revamped with a support-focused design. The self-help search bar and links to our most-needed services are front and center, making it easier for faculty, staff and students to find the information and help they need.

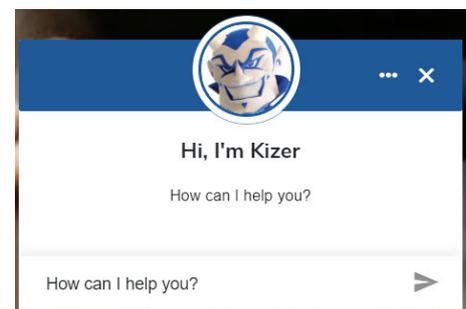


To Meet the Communication Demands of a Time of Crisis, CCSU Uses Artificial Intelligence to Provide Answers 24/7

“Information Technology” means something different in a time of crisis. Providing information—providing answers to questions—is about safeguarding both physical and mental health. We took to heart the CDC’s guidelines for crisis and emergency communication: Be First, Be Right, Be Credible. And we knew anxious students and parents would be coming to CCSU’s website looking for answers. We wanted to make sure they got answers to their questions—in multiples areas of our website, so they wouldn’t have to hunt for them.

In order to provide those answers 24/7, IT implemented a chatbot that makes use of artificial intelligence. We’ve named it “Kizer,” in honor of the Blue Devils’ mascot. Questions that Kizer can’t answer are escalated to a staff member, who initiates live chat to help out. Kizer the chatbot has been invaluable in helping to answer questions from concerned students and parents about the constantly changing and evolving issues related to COVID-19. No matter what time of day, Kizer has enabled CCSU to be first, to be right, and to be credible.

Kizer is also helping out with the day-to-day questions students have. We’ve implemented Kizer on high-traffic web sites pages, providing students with a 24/7 answers to their questions. Kizer is ready to provide information on the websites of Admissions, Registrar, Financial Aid, Bursar’s office, Student Wellness Services, and Information Technology. Kizer is available as well to answer basic questions for student services and academic departments, thereby automating most responses to “frequently asked questions.”



CCSU eSports

DID YOU KNOW?

CCSU was selected as the 2020 "BEST eSports Project" from Commercial Integrator.

Judges review submissions on the basis of unique features and benefits of the solution, challenges, length of time, and interaction with other parties during installation, as well as the impact and reception from the customer's organization.

LOOKING BACK & LOOKING FORWARD 20,000 Visitors in Year One

In September 2019, CCSU implemented a first of its kind dedicated egaming room, the CCSU eSports Training Center. It contains cutting edge gaming PCs, peripherals, and equipment. The eSports Training Center is connected to Connecticut's fastest dark-fiber optical network, the CT Education Network (CEN) providing 1GB dedicated connectivity to the Center. CCSU believes eSports as a way for students to build peer groups, meet new friends, and collaborate in a competitive environment. Video games are great tools for teaching critical thinking, problem solving and task management. CCSU is working in concert with Unity Gaming, the leader in game development engines, to produce and develop academic offerings in character creation and design, eCommerce, mobile app and game creation, video game storyboarding and story development.

Before the shutdown, the eSports Center hosted the Play VS State of CT eSports finals, undergraduate classes, and five competitive varsity teams. During COVID, the eSports Varsity Teams practiced and competed using their home computers.



While capacity will be reduced to accommodate social distancing, the eSports Center is ready for the return to full campus operations.

Remote Access Solution

We created a Virtual Classroom/Lab environment comprised of 350 Windows and 50 Apple computers for remote use. These computers are used to substitute classroom instruction as well as provide computers for students to use for homework, research, and class preparation.

Customer Service

Providing top customer service continues to be a high priority for Client Support Services. To that end, most of the services provided by the Information Technology department are coordinated through the HSM (Heat Service Management) system, either through our service request portal or by contacting the Help Desk. By doing this, an independent customer satisfaction survey is utilized. The CCSU IT department continues to surpass industry benchmarks in all areas. We've logged over 24,000 incident tickets and close to 5000 service requests in the last year.

Under Construction

CCSU IT, in conjunction with administrators, faculty, and staff have been working the past six months on construction projects for Henry Barnard (SEPS) and the new engineering building (SEST).

DID YOU KNOW? More than 200 new internal and external Wireless Access Points (WAPs) were installed on campus to support the COVID clinics, field hospital, and outdoor areas. Eighty access points were added to Barnard Hall and the new engineering building.



Left: Karen Arborio, Jim Grupp, & Sean McNickle lay out a plan for technology in new engineering building. Right: CCSU Alum and CEN Network Engineer Brad Tudisca connects Hartford Hospital to the CCSU Field Hospital

Faculty & Staff Processing Power

900

Highest Number of simultaneous meetings at one time

7,500+

Microsoft Teams users



13,000+

Messages to Kizer the Chatbot

"In preparation to moving back to Barnard Hall, [Tom B, Peter S and] several other IT folks are working hard to get our computer labs ready. Their support, timely work, constant communication, and listening to my needs, underscore their brilliant work and commitment to do good. Not only the labs are ready but re-imaged to reflect changes that will impact our courses. I can't ask for better support. Thank you."

Farough Abed – Ed Leadership Faculty

MICROSOFT BOOKINGS FOR VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS

With reduced staff on-campus, virtual office hours provide students with the ability to meet with faculty and staff using online meetings tools. Scheduled appointments are managed with Microsoft Bookings, where students go to a centralized calendar and register for an appointment for services offered by a department. Faculty also use Bookings to enable students to meet with them for virtual office hours and advising appointments. Bookings integrates with Microsoft Teams to create the online virtual meeting.

Data, Information, & Reports

CCSU has used Hyperion reporting, commonly known as "Banner reporting," for more than 15 years. Hyperion is being phased out and the university is working with two new tools (Quest DataPoint and WebFocus) to replace existing reporting services. These legacy Hyperion reports were moved to one of the two new tools. The benefit of these tools is beyond running traditional reports, users can setup dashboards, real-time data feeds, and scheduled reports. Several departments piloted this change from October to March and in April the university began working with departments to move all reports over before the end of Hyperion support on January 1, 2022.



82,000+

WebEx Meetings last year

4,921

**IT Service
Requests Completed**

5,500+

Cisco WebEx registered users



Microsoft Teams

Information Technology began its implementation of Microsoft Teams in February 2020. Microsoft Teams is a feature-rich collaboration tool enabling file sharing, chat, meetings, and more. When COVID-19 forced a campus closure in March, we worked to fast-track the implementation to ensure that all faculty and staff could use this tool for virtual meetings and file collaboration. From March until December, we offered training and worked with each campus department to transition from traditional network file storage and into Microsoft Teams for file collaboration. Microsoft has continued to improve Teams during the pandemic. New features include the ability to have breakout rooms, to make up to 20 people viewable at a time, and to use a phone to call into web conferences. Today Teams is used regularly by more than 7,500 members of the university community and has replaced much of the telephone traffic we've seen in previous years.

Adobe Sign

The need to pivot to remote/virtual operations quickly due to COVID-19 meant that many of our forms and paper-based ways of doing things needed re-thinking. Not wanting to force a global policy onto the entire university, IT initially worked with Human Resources to transform their paper-based Part-Time Faculty Contract approval and signature process to an Adobe Sign digital workflow. Once faculty and staff experienced how well Adobe Sign worked in this "test case," it was seen as a needed, vital tool that would be helpful in many other areas of the university.

From the CTI

The Center for Teaching and Innovation (CTI) partnered with its colleagues in IT to provide a comprehensive menu of offerings to prepare faculty and students for remote and HyFlex instruction. The CTI, led by Jennifer Nicoletti, the Director of Instructional Design and Distance Learning, offered synchronous and asynchronous workshops on intuitive course design, remote engagement, teaching with tablets, break-out room configuration, and integrated web-conferencing through Blackboard



Collaborate. Recognizing that technology had become an integral part of the teaching and learning environment, best practices in technology-infused pedagogy were pillars of each program deployed by the team. This ensured that the high-quality educational experiences Central's students are accustomed to were preserved in all environments.

The team worked throughout Summer and Fall 2020 to ensure the HyFlex teaching and learning experiences were as rich as possible – simultaneously developing a streamlined process for faculty while working to maximize the efficacy of existing tools. As we continued to expand our collective knowledge about HyFlex pedagogy, the team constantly pushed the envelope of feasibility to expand the number of tools in our collective toolbox and enhance the HyFlex experience.



Campus Changes

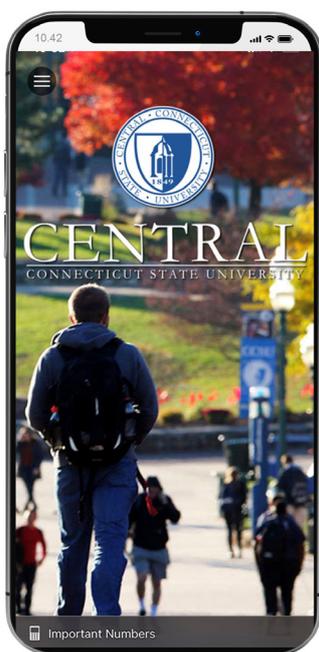


Digital Signage

CCSU added, updated, or installed over 180 new display monitors and digital signage players across campus. The university exited three different signage systems and standardized on a single system across campus. This digital signage system is now tied into emergency alerts sent by the campus police department and provides consistent messaging and information ranging from the campus event calendar to welcome and directional messages to guests on campus.

Mobile App

CCSU implemented the Ellucian Mobile application in May 2020. It delivers and displays key information about CCSU services and resources. It includes access to major university resources such as the library, bookstore, athletics, IT, LiveSafe, Dining Menu, Events and Campus Map. It also includes links to all CCSU social media platforms as well as links to academic information: Course Schedule, Grades & Transcripts, and the Academic Calendar.



Parking Lot WiFi

COVID showed us that a reliable internet connection is key to student success. When the decision was made for a partial re-opening of campus in Fall of 2020, it became clear that we needed to provide increased WiFi access for our commuter students, a population that makes up about two-thirds of our student body. To meet this need, we provided "drive up WiFi" in some of our parking lots. The IT department partnered with the Facilities Management team to identify two parking lots where we installed internet access. In total, we added WiFi access points to 50 parking spaces behind the Hilltop Café, and 100 parking spaces in the Welte parking garage.

COVID ACTIVITY

IT Equipment Distribution & Trailer and Enhanced Support

As it did for the rest of the world, everything changed for the University and information technology in the Spring of 2020 due to COVID-19. Every member of IT played a role in making this transition as seamless as possible. From a technology “drive-in” for faculty, staff and students to emergency support for HyFlex learning. Through this pandemic, IT distributed over 1,000 laptops, desktops and Chromebooks as well as webcams, headsets, monitors, and keyboards to support online and HyFlex learning. The IT equipment trailer has remained open, providing a fairly contactless method of picking up and returning equipment. Additionally, smart lockers were purchased and placed in the Student Center for those who needed flexibility in pick up or return times or location. The IT division reorganized to bolster the help desk staff and front-line responders in order to handle the growing number of technology support and training requests. As distance-learning and remote-working became the new normal, IT continued training, problem solving and adapting for a hybrid Fall '20 and Spring '21 semester.



Technology in Motion

Beyond information technology equipment and HyFlex classroom construction, CCSU IT provided support for university COVID operations. IT was present on multiple core planning and subcommittee groups. In addition, IT support with registration and check-in efforts with Griffin Hospital for COVID swabbing, testing, and notifications as well as Hartford Hospital who setup and deployed a field hospital on campus. In April, IT supported CHC in their deployment of a vaccine clinic at Kaiser Gym, joining the campus effort to get the vaccine out to students.





Major COVID IT Activities

- Implemented new COVID symptom tracker and reporting for students, staff, faculty, vendors, and guests. CCSU remains the only institution in our system that requires daily COVID screening for all persons on campus increasing our visibility information day-to-day.
- An emergency call center for contact tracers to receive calls and perform tracing activities, and provided training to over 20 tracers and their supervisors operating 7 days a week.
- Medica as a health information system to provide incident tracking capabilities for new cases (people who tested positive), those with symptoms, and those who have had close contact.
- Created daily and weekly dashboards for management and COVID leadership operational reporting, as well as reporting on the web site and to the system office. These reports were used at twice daily institutional briefings on the status of the university operations and assisted operations.
- Created a link between CCSU and the New Britain Board of Health for coordinating tracing activities for commuter students who live in New Britain, providing commuter students direct connectivity with New Britain DPH and critical resources (food, shelter, etc).
- Leveraged capabilities in Banner to track which students were tested each week so we could provide more detailed information on who was, and was not tested each week, thereby improving compliance, and student outreach. The university can now break down student testing data by resident, commuter, student worker, and athlete as well as various geographic distances from campus.
- Helped implement dedicated wireless and wired connections to protect HIPPA (health) data securely in concert with the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) used by Griffin Hospital, Hartford Health Care, and CHC.
- Several areas in IT worked together to make free printing available to students in two locations on campus, the Student Center and Willard-DiLoretto Hall. To date, students have printed approximately 3,000 pages in a limited-touch environment.

