

Overview of Divisions, Recent and Approaching Milestones

Office of the Vice President for Information Technology

Overview

The Office of the Vice President for Information Technology (OVPIT) provides a base level of centrally administered technology services to all members of the UAB community. New services for faculty, staff, and students include a centralized information technology (IT) help desk called the AskIT Help Desk, IT Desktop Support, support for researchers through Academic Computing, support for distance learning, online educational resources, and increased IT security (these are in addition to providing support for the university's administrative business systems, telephone systems, operator and network services).

OVPIT funds some of its services through direct charges to departments or students requesting the services (including telephone services, tier-two desktop and server support, and electronic information storage). An administrative IT fee assessed for each university faculty and staff person funds the university-wide Microsoft Campus Agreement Subscription, enhanced IT security, and e-mail and directory services. A portion of the Learning Resource Fee funds the Microsoft licensing agreement for each student, as well as a help desk.

Recent and Approaching Milestones

- The university signed a campus licensing agreement with Microsoft that covers all faculty, staff, and students. The agreement represents the largest student coverage in Microsoft's Gulf State Territory (Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida).
- The AskIT Help Desk will be fully staffed and ready to provide campus-wide assistance starting in November 2002.
- The Active Directory and Campus Exchange e-mail projects will go into production by the end of 2002. The pilot groups are Information Technology and Electrical and Computer Engineering. Migration of existing and new Exchange users will continue through the spring of 2003.
- A Storage Area Network was recently purchased and installed to provide a mass storage solution for the campus including the new and existing administrative systems and Exchange e-mail users.
- We are reviewing options for pilot projects utilizing personal digital certificates.
- The new Oracle administrative systems will go live for Human Resources and Finance in July and October of 2003 respectively.
- The Communications Infrastructure Project will be substantially complete at the end of 2003. At completion, every building and all classrooms will have upgraded, high-speed network wiring and electronics.
- Network wiring in Camp and Denman Halls was recently completed providing students with high-speed Internet connections in their rooms and common areas.
- The Call Center will add speech recognition to the operator and paging services during the first quarter of 2003.
- A new voice mail system will be deployed during the summer of 2003.
- A new Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP) directory service went into production this summer. The LDAP will form the basis for a single logon ID for many new and existing services across campus such as WebCT, Active Directory, and the new administrative systems.

- Academic Computing, in cooperation with six other Alabama institutions and the UA System office, has established an Internet videoconferencing services infrastructure. The focus for next year is pilot uses of this technology for instruction across campuses, greater awareness of this resource, and training in how to use it.
- The university has obtained a distributed computing cluster that is available for use by the campus; in 2003, Academic Computing will explore interest in developing a campus-wide “grid” computing infrastructure.
- Shodor Foundation and the national chapter of Sigma Xi has selected Academic Computing and the local chapter of the Sigma Xi Honor Society to host a Visualization Workshop at UAB aimed at introducing new methods for teaching math and science to undergraduate, high school, and middle school faculty.
- Wireless networking currently used in the Great Hall and conference rooms in Hill University Center, will be expanded to all classrooms and some public areas.

Divisions

Academic Computing

Academic Computing focuses on IT support for research and other academic activities. Services provided by Academic Computing include recommending research and academic IT infrastructure and priorities, preparing IT-related grant proposals on behalf of UAB, and managing funded projects. This division also assists or collaborates with others on grant activities requiring IT resources; tests emerging technologies and coordinates their integration into the existing infrastructure; and is acquiring and managing high performance computing resources such as Beowulf clusters and network storage.

Academic Computing manages the UAB IT Internship program, which in its first year, employed ten students and provided a supplement to IT staffing on the help desk, security, documentation, and research computing. The successful program, now in its second year, is being expanded.

The current emerging technology focus includes Internet videoconferencing and improving services through better use of enterprise directory services. Coordination of UAB’s new infrastructure with national standards and research directions occurs through participation in the Internet2 organization, as well as through NSF-funded programs such as the NSF Middleware Initiative and EPSCOR Internet2 Middleware program.

Call Center

The UAB Call Center offers a wide range of services. In addition to answering approximately 2.7 million phone calls per year, this division provides general information, paging services, maintenance and distribution of after-hours protocols, and on-call schedules for campus and hospital services. The Call Center also provides witnessing for telephone consent orders, notification during emergencies and disasters, and many other services.

Customer Services

Customer Services oversees the AskIT Help Desk, IT Desktop Support, and IT Documentation. Together these services provide comprehensive, multi-tier, end-user support for the entire UAB community. Customer Services also negotiates site-license agreements and volume discounts on hardware purchases, supports special interest groups, and provides computer training in conjunction with UAB libraries and the Office of Human Resources.

The AskIT Help Desk is the point of contact in the multi-tiered help desk service. AskIT provides free phone or in-person computer support for all UAB researchers, faculty, staff, and students. The staff works to triage or solve any problem and refers unresolved issues to the next appropriate level of service.

IT Desktop Support is the contract support service for Linux, Mac, and Windows system end-user desktops and networks. For those who do not have a contract with IT Desktop Support, they also offer services at an hourly rate. This group also provides printer, copier, and fax machine maintenance.

IT Documentation creates informational resources and documentation for IT end-users and UAB Systems Administrators. This group also produces original news articles for the *AskIT* series published in the *UAB Reporter* and oversee OVPIT Web development.

Data Security

Data Security is responsible for coordinating Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) compliance including EDI, security, and privacy. Data Security consults with legal as needed and develops IT security policy and training materials.

This division does forensic investigation and evidence gathering of computer-related incidents for accurate presentation and interpretation, and develops and manages Incident Response for IT related incidents. Data Security also audits vulnerability for Web applications, servers, desktops, and subnets and supplies information on methods for taking corrective action.

Infrastructure Services

Infrastructure Services (ITIS) provides support for many of the systems required for the daily functioning of the IT division and UAB as a whole. These services include public key distribution, maintenance of campus Web servers, management of IT's Storage Area Network, and other various systems. In cooperation with Customer Service, ITIS provides contract support for many departments and schools. Supported systems include e-mail, file and print, Web, database, and other systems upon which departments depend for their day-to-day function.

ITIS is also working with Telecommunication services to implement the Microsoft Active Directory and Campus Exchange e-mail projects. These systems will provide the campus with enhanced e-mail, Web mail, calendaring, and other workflow functions.

The Application Development Group under ITIS provides custom programming services to the UAB community. Current projects include an information repository for a nationwide research study, replacement of the UAB Police Department dispatch system, as well as support for the Budget Model System.

Instructional Technology

Instructional Technology is responsible for the WebCT and Blackboard online education resources and provides streaming media services for faculty and staff who wish to make their own class-based video media available on the Internet. Currently, there are 193 WebCT and 100 Blackboard courses in use or under development by UAB faculty in the Alabama Online High school, and the schools of arts and humanities, business, health related professions, nursing, medicine, public health, and social and behavioral sciences.

The University Computer Center (TUCC)

TUCC supports virtually all administrative areas with online applications assisting business functions such as student records, payroll/personnel, financial accounting, purchasing/accounts payable, equipment inventory, budget development, and UAB's electronic forms system. This group is heavily involved in converting its human resource and financial systems to Oracle. Following this undertaking, TUCC will be involved with the conversion of its student system. TUCC also manages the administrative data warehouse that analyzes historical, financial, human resources, and student data.

Telecommunication Services

Telecommunication Services maintains one of the largest telephone systems in the state of Alabama. Basic local, long distance, voice mail, and other telephone services are provided to the university faculty, staff, hospital, and students in our residence halls.

Data Communications and Network Services maintains the UAB intranet, a gigabit Ethernet backbone connecting all buildings on campus and the connections to the Internet, Internet2, and the Alabama Research and Education Network. The infrastructure supporting this network is one of the most advanced systems in the country.

In addition to installing an extensive fiber optic network running to each building, the university embarked on a massive intra-building upgrade to bring the wiring to a level above current standards. The standards adopted by UAB three years ago are now being adopted industry-wide.

Network help desk support is provided to over 100 department network administrators on campus through the virtual help desk and through phone-in support. This group also maintains the UAB Electronic Phonebook, and the campus LDAP directory that follows the eduPerson standard. Other network services provided are LISTSERV, USENET News, mail forwarding, and mail gateways.