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1997

Information Services Annual Report, 1996-97

Bates College

Annual Report
1996-1997
Information Services

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Initial Goals:

- Upgrades:
  - Mithras, Abacus
  - Public computer labs
  - Electronic classrooms
  - Faculty and staff computers
- Support for collaborative grants with Bowdoin and Colby
  - Mellon I and II
- Expansion of training options for curricular support and administrative Improved access to Help information using the WWW
- Development of the HelpDesk's process for tracking calls
- Improvement of the support process for HelpDesk calls
- Continued improvement of the software user interface
- Upgrades to productivity software
- Implement secure Web server
- Plan for back-ups
- Upgrade Internet connection speed
- Plan for year 2000
- Support for and production of BatesCard
- Continued implementation of Banner product
- Planning for new Academic Building
- CWIS Team
- Expand and reassign staff within IS
- Assist in strengthening AV program
- Improve communication within IS
- Development and revision of policies
- Evaluate and strengthen budgeting process
- Design and develop a Project management process

Major Accomplishments:

·   Abacus' speed greatly increased by upgrading the machine to a Dec Alpha. This upgrade has alleviated the network bottlenecks that were caused by increased use of electronic mail and the Internet on campus.

·   The instruction room in Ladd has become a highly used room for teaching and student work. Treat, Carnegie, Libbey, and Coram have been upgraded to pentiums and higher powered MACS.

·   Work on the Language lab has made it a highly used teaching room in addition to a student work area.

·   The work to bring faculty to a level of machine which can utilize the network resources is making good progress. This year, 92 faculty computers were upgraded and 20+ were added for new faculty. Many staff computers have been upgraded to meet data, software, and network demands as well.

·   In conjunction with Library faculty liaisons, training staff have begun work to offer more individual faculty training as well as curricular support for technology and the concepts needed by students. More classes have been offered to administrative offices to meet specific needs and new staff orientation training is underway. We have reorganized the help information on the WWW and are increasing the self-help options. A group with representatives from all IS groups has been working on the IS web area. The group is now in the process of defining what help pages to maintain on the web, and how they should be organized. The group also hopes to make the pages key word searchable. The reorganized pages should be available by the time the students return to campus in the fall.
Training has held approximately 200 classes, some by faculty request and during class time. About 2000 students, faculty, and staff have participated in the IS training sessions.

·   The HelpDesk has worked closely with repair and support to make response time better and more in keeping with the user's needs. The total number of logged calls (questions that are answered immediately are not logged) for the period between September 2, 1996 and April 30, 1997 was 1,176. Phone calls coming into the HelpDesk for the same period totaled 9,734.

         Of the 1176 logged calls:
                  410 were classified under the main heading of hardware
                  474 were classified under the main heading of software
                  225 were classified under the main heading of network
                  67 were classified under the miscellaneous headings

·   The software integration group has made a number of improvements in the installation process for and access to network software. This is making it much easier to maintain labs, and offer new versions and new software to faculty, staff, and students.

·   The need to have a secure Web server led us to begin research into what products are available to integrate into the network. This service is core to the future deployment of the Web Banner product and other secure transactions.

· Additional backup devices were purchased and installed on all Vines servers to provided enhanced network backup capabilities. A new high capacity backup jukebox was installed on Mithras to reduce the time to complete Banner backups.

· Access to the Internet for the network is provided by BBN Planet in Cambridge, Mass. A T-1 line running at partial speed provided access until early fall 1996. Analysis of the options for faster service speeds and the dramatic growth in utilization over that past year the decision was made to increase from 256KB/second to full T1 access of 1544KB/sec. (See attached usage chart)

· Information Services has taken a preliminary look at major hardware and software in use by the College and at this time sees little or no impact for year 2000 issues. Many individually owned products exist on campus and IS urges owners to investigate their potential problems themselves. IS also urges anyone dealing with software and data from off campus sources to investigate whether those sources will create problems. IS has recommended that the facilities management personnel investigate all CHIP related control systems at the College for potential year 2000 problems. A more rigorous discussion (project) may need to occur during the summer of 1997 to ensure that all impact on the College has been reviewed.

· Although BatesCard production was successfully developed to the specifications of the first phase of implementation in the fall of 1996, it has become evident that support for the BatesCard has dwindled on campus. No operations function has been created for the on going support of the BatesCard in its current iteration. Therefore the card has not been implemented to support summer 1997 operations. Information Services has suspended its role in card operations and continues only in its role to support the hardware and software integrity of the Batescard system.

· During fiscal '97 the Student and Financial Aid modules of Banner were successfully implemented. Although one or two cyclical processes remain to be run for the first time, the overall implementation has gone fairly smoothly. The Human Resources module is the last remaining module and we began the implementation process in May 1997.

· IS has spent significant time participating in the planning group for the New Academic Building . Efforts have concentrated on classroom technologies. Once the project was approved, major time was invested in determining what voice and data systems needed to be moved in order to proceed with the construction of the NAB. IS then worked with Physical Plant and the electrical engineers to design and begin implementation of the infrastructure systems necessary to support the construction phase of the NAB.

· New staff were hired in training, helpdesk, and support. The addition of these people has made a great difference in our ability to support users and to add new training and materials. Re-location of current staff to new positions within IS has been a positive change in our ability to collaborate while being in diverse locations.

· We have been having facilitated, biweekly meetings to focus on major impact and trouble areas for software, support, etc. Members of the Library have also participated. These meeting have been extremely productive and have been the largest boon to communication about complex issues.

· ISMT has been working on existing issues so that a plan for AV support can be developed.

· A number of policies, such as User Guidelines, Standards, and User Accounts, have been revised to meet changing needs.

·	ISMT has met with the new VP for Finance as a first step in continuing to improve our budgeting process.

·	ISMT is working on implementing a project management methodology. Information Services, with its customers has developed a requirements list for the process. The logical design has been developed and reviewed. Future steps include physically designing the process, reviewing the design, constructing, implementing and testing the process. The target for this process to be in place will be the fall of '97.

Issues in Progress:

IS continues to work towards becoming an organization with low hierarchy and increased individual and collaborative participation in decision making.

The Bates culture is being transformed by changes that cause us to live and breathe in an internally and externally connected environment. We also continue to re-think ourselves in these new terms. Most issues have now been elevated to the institutional level (security of information, access to data, freedom of speech in electronic form). Although this debate is not easy, the institution has engaged in many important and continuing discussions that are leading to change.

IS has been involved in the visioning process that the college is going through. The setting of consistent priorities with those of the college is critical to our wise use of resources and meaningful on-going planning.

Obstacles:

·	The obstacle of dispersed physical locations for the IS groups continues to have major significant consequences for the IS organization. Helping staff in IS to view the organization as a whole requires continual effort on the part of the ISMT, whereas co-location would communicate this concept easily.

·	Significant demands are being placed on the organization to provide more and more support for a growing world of diverse products and conflicting needs. There are also requests to provide extended hours of direct coverage, including an operations function. We have not been able to allocate staff to accommodate these requests without serious degradation of service during business hours.

·	IS has a number of employees with back, carpal tunnel, and other health issues that make moving heavy equipment and/or doing repetitive tasks difficult to impossible. We are working with Eric and Judy in Personnel to make accommodations. We are in a position of having to hire temporary employees to get the needed jobs done.

Plans for 1997-1998:

·	Banner

	There will be several items of focus with the Banner product for the 97-98 year. First will be the continued implementation of the Human Resource module. Second the conversion to the next major releases of Oracle and Banner. Third will be implementation of the new WEB modules for

Banner. Fourth will be the reiterative visits to each major module for tweaking, training, report writing required during subsequent years of operation. Fifth will be the planning for data warehousing strategy. Finally will be the planning for the "GUI" release of Banner scheduled for mid to late 1998 for Bates College.

Upgrades

Upgrades to servers and networks to support WEB enabled products from Banner will be needed. Faculty will have machines by the end of summer that can take advantage of network resources.
The Network will need to be redesigned to take into account increased use as well as new technologies such as video conferencing.

· Staff Training

Introduction to programming and design tools for a WEB enabled version of the Banner product (eg. HTML, JAVA, DEV2k, etc.). Continued training of the staff in Oracle database administration, report writing tools and Oracle to third party interfaces. Training for staff to be able to lead projects and work more collaboratively.

· Strategic Planning and Operational Plan

ISMT created a plan about two years ago and now we need to link operations and project management in a logical way. We will need to revisit the plan and begin the needed revisions.

· CBB Collaboration and Video Conferencing

IS will be working with Bowdoin and Colby to take advantage of grant opportunities for collaborative work in the languages as well as video conferencing options for each of the campuses.

· Improved Communication with Users

IS will be working to involve more faculty, staff, and students in our strategic planning as well as in how we provide day to day operations and services.

· Planning for New Academic Building

Additional planning efforts for the NAB will continue to require IS resources. The efforts will include voice & data wiring system design, Classroom Technology design, and video conferencing possibilities.

· Planning for Year 2000

ISMT will make a determination about Year 2000 planning as a project.

· Banner Upgrades

Oracle 7.2.3, Banner 2.1.x, GUI and Web are all on the slate for the next year. The use of Banner will change with the possibilities the updated versions bring.