

University of Windsor
Senate

*5.2.2: **Information Technology Services Annual Report (2022-2023)**

Item for: **Information**

Forwarded by: **Academic Policy Committee**

See attached.

Information Technology Services Annual Report 2022-2023

Introduction

The [mission](#) of the Information Technology (IT) Services Department is to ensure that University systems, applications, and processes are designed, implemented and operated both effectively and efficiently, and serve the Mission and Strategic Priorities of the institution. The department provides a wide range of services to UWindsor faculty, staff, and students.

The goals, objects, and projects were heavily influenced in the previous year by the cybersecurity incident that impacted the University in June of 2022. In response to the severe effects of the incident, significant effort and resources were devoted to increase the security posture of the University and to prevent future large-scale cyber incidents. While not heavily and explicitly referenced in this document due to there not being a clear alignment with the Strategic Plan, Cybersecurity projects continue to make a major component of the project work and operational tasks in the Department.

For additional information regarding how the strategic direction of IT Services supports the Strategic Priorities of the University, please refer to the [IT Services IT Strategic Plan](#).

Area's Goals and Objectives of the Reporting Year and the University's Strategic Plan

I. Addressing Foundational Commitments:

1. Establishing and Implementing an Institutional Data Strategy

- **Establishment of Data Strategy Governance and Workplan**
Led by IT Services, the University has made preliminary strides in its data strategy efforts, particularly through a collaborative session with the Education Advisory Board (EAB). This session was instrumental in forming a high-level vision and governance structure for the data strategy, providing valuable insights and frameworks tailored to the needs of the University. The workshop conducted by EAB emphasized the importance of a robust governance structure in ensuring the effective use of data across the university and was a pivotal step in defining the University's approach to data management, aligning it with best practices and strategic objectives.
- **Support Establishing a Research Data Management Policy**
IT Services supported activities to develop and implement a Research Data Management (RDM) Strategy. This effort is a response to the Tri-Council's Research Data Management Policy, released in March 2021, which mandates institutions receiving CIHR, NSERC, or SSHRC funds to establish an institutional RDM strategy. The work completed outlines the current and planned RDM capacity, focusing on data stewardship and research data management. It emphasizes the need for ongoing dialogue, collaboration, and adaptation to the evolving needs of the research community and changes in the data environment.

2. Foster Resilience and Institutional Learning through Connection, Reconnection and Collaboration

- **Client Services Renovation**
A small renovation was completed to create a more inviting and accessible space for employees and students, enhancing their experience and fostering increased interaction and collaboration with our Service Desk. By integrating elements that promote inclusivity and innovation, the new client services area is designed to support the University's commitment to collaborative learning and leadership.
- **Meeting room upgrades**
Completion of five meeting rooms with hybrid technology aligns with the focus on inclusion and belonging, enhancing the institutional capacity to learn, lead, and innovate, both collectively and individually. By

equipping these rooms with advanced hybrid technology, the University facilitates more dynamic and inclusive meetings, allowing participants, whether on campus or remote, to engage effectively.

- Network Upgrades
Completion of wireless upgrades in Essex Hall, CARE, Alumni Hall, and Vanier buildings are instrumental in bolstering the University's digital infrastructure, facilitating seamless connectivity, and ensuring robust network performance.
 - Upgrade of Leddy G101A Computer Lab
Completion of technology upgrade in G101A with new computers and monitors to support teaching and learning.
3. Continue to Foster and Build Welcoming, Inclusive and Engaging Physical and Virtual Spaces
 - Classroom Renovation
Completion of 6 classrooms integrating hyflex technology and supporting the renovation of Essex Hall 186. This work is part of our broader objective to ensure that the planning, construction, and maintenance of infrastructure are conducted in a manner that is transparent, equitable, and consistent with our institutional values that weighs classroom renovations objectively against multiple criteria such as accessibility, infrastructure, and usage.
 4. Ensuring that Faculty and Staff Have the Skills and Support to Maximize Impact, Growth, and Engagement
 - Increased Professional Development
As part of the Department's commitment to our staff, the Department has implemented a budget of \$150,000 per year to support the development of our staff to ensure they are able to maximize their impact to our campus community.
 5. Telling Our Stories and Sharing Our Knowledge
 - Relaunch of Campus Technician Meetings
The relaunch of campus technician meetings at the university is a strategic initiative designed to bolster internal communication and foster a robust community of practice. These meetings have served as a vital conduit for knowledge mobilization, enabling technicians from various departments to share insights, best practices, and innovative solutions to common campus challenges. By regularly convening, the technicians not only enhance their individual skill sets but also contribute significantly to the collective expertise available within the university. This initiative aligns seamlessly with our broader goals of enhancing campus engagement and establishing efficient feedback loops among students, staff, and faculty. Through these meetings, we create a more interconnected campus environment where knowledge is not only shared but also collaboratively cultivated.
 6. Improving Institutional Processes and Coordination of Services
 - Service Level Agreements
IT has taken a key role in the implementation of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) which serve as a foundational element in enhancing user engagement in process development and review. This initiative directly contributes to reducing duplication of efforts and enhancing transparency. Through SLAs, there is a systematic approach to defining the services, performance metrics, and responsibilities, which streamlines interfaces and practices.
 - Adobe Acrobat Pro and Adobe Sign
The implementation of Adobe Acrobat Pro and Adobe Sign supports the goal of reducing operational costs while enhancing the ability to automate processes and save time. These newly centrally procured tools

provide a robust platform for document management and e-signature, streamlining workflows that traditionally require manual intervention.

- Oracle PUM Upgrade
The successful Oracle PeopleSoft Update Manager (PUM) upgrade plays a pivotal role in increasing functionality and supporting the overall objective of enhancing process analyses as it related to the University's UWinsite system. This upgrade brings new features and improvements, enabling more efficient management of university systems.
- AIX to Linux Server Modernization
Significant effort has been invested in the transition from AIX to Linux servers which is a critical step towards enhancing performance and reliability of key systems like UWinsite. This shift not only promises enhanced performance but also provides better tools for supporting upgrades and investigating issues. The modernization effort aligns with the strategic goal of streamlining processes and interfaces, leading to improved efficiency and reduced duplication of efforts in IT operations.
- Micros Replacement (Volante)
Upgrading the Point of Sale systems with the introduction of Volante as a replacement for Micros aligns with the strategic goal of streamlining processes and enhancing user engagement. This upgrade represents a significant step in modernizing the payment and transaction systems across the campus, leading to improved efficiency and user experience.

II. Advancing Strategic Priorities:

1. Advancing Bold, Impactful Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity

No significant project work completed on this strategic priority; however, ongoing support for Faculty and Researchers is ongoing on a request basis and positive impact on these items are realized through as secondary benefits through activities such as network upgrades. IT Services also plays a supporting role in the implementation of capital projects supporting these items such as the Downtown Bio Art building.

2. Advancing the Journey toward Truth and Reconciliation

No significant project work completed on this strategic priority; however, ongoing support on a request basis and positive impact on these items are realized through as secondary benefits through activities such as network upgrades, and capital project support for locations such as the Smudging room in the Faculty of Law or Turtle Island House renovation.

3. Becoming an Increasingly Equitable, Diverse, Inclusive and Just University

- Equitable language
Creation of inclusive language resourcing for all UWindsor IT staff with the expectation that they will utilize inclusive technical language in work-related conversations and documentation.
<https://uwindsor.teamdynamix.com/TDClient/1975/Portal/KB/ArticleDet?ID=141931>
- Improved Equitable Hiring Practices
Systematic review of hiring practices has occurred in the Department along with broader discussion regarding EDI activities as part of ongoing Employee Engagement action plans. As a result, all hiring panels endeavor to have a diverse membership and EDI lens is required to have a minimum of 15 points.
- Management Training in Courageous Conversations
Completion of "Courageous Conversations" workshop by IT Management members to help build community, launch innovation, and navigate the predictable pitfalls in interracial, multi-cultural

conversations about race. The ultimate goal of the workshop was to develop our leaders to understand the impact of race on their lives, their work, and their overall growth.

- Monsido launch
Implementation of an accessibility tool for the University of Windsor web presence. The tool helps ensure a high-quality web experience that is accessible to all users by scanning the website and investigating issues on the webpages along with suggestions on how to better optimize the webpage and remediate accessibility issues. With successful implementation the University has a singular holistic look at the accessibility of our web presence.
4. Ensuring High Quality, Relevant, and Just Teaching, Learning, and Student Experience for Everyone
- Support Launch of Brightspace
Working in close collaboration with Office of Open Learning and Centre for Teaching and Learning in the successful replacement of Blackboard with Brightspace.
 - Classroom Renovation
Completion of 6 classrooms integrating hyflex technology and supporting the renovation of Essex Hall 186.
 - Network Upgrades
Completion of wireless upgrades in Essex Hall, CARE, Alumni Hall, and Vanier buildings are instrumental in bolstering the University's digital infrastructure, facilitating seamless connectivity, and ensuring robust network performance.
 - New Building Support
Completion of state of the art Networking and consultation / oversight of audio visual technology in new Law Building.
5. Fostering an Engaged, Healthy, Safe, and Environmentally Sustainable Campus
- Employee engagement group in ITS
Implementation of standing committee on employee engagement in the department. Initiative has led to clearer understanding of challenges and limitations and has increased the engagement of IT Services staff.
 - Increased Training and development
As part of the Department's commitment to our staff, the Department has implemented a budget of \$150,000 per year to support the development of our staff to ensure they are able to maximize their impact to our campus community.
 - Performance Management
Launch of internal performance management practices in IT that creates a formal framework for discussions with staff about their goals, where they are doing well, and where they require additional opportunities to showcase their skills.
6. Generating Local and Global Impact through Partnership and Community Engagement

No significant project work completed on this strategic priority; however, ongoing support for Faculty and Researchers is ongoing on a request basis such as partnership security reviews and upgraded IT Infrastructure.

III. Challenges:

- **Human Resources**
The department has been significantly affected by an IT talent drain in the area compounded by significant compliment of staff retiring or notifying of intention to retire. During the current calendar year, the Department has lost 6 staff to retirements.
- **Costs**
Inflationary market conditions have made procurement of new hardware and service challenging. The department is experiencing some renewals with vendors or equipment purchases increasing by 50% or higher over pre-COVID prices.
- **Hardware Lead Times**
Lead times for hardware are improving; however, there are still significant delays with some manufacturers. Primarily, classroom AV Equipment is still experiencing delays of 6+ months.

Future Actions/Initiatives

- **Cyber Security Enhancements**
 - Implementation of conditional access rules on critical University Systems. Users will need to be on corporate managed devices that will ensure minimum security specifications prior to accessing confidential or sensitive information / systems.
 - Implementation of Privileged Account Management tools to better control remote access to University servers and core infrastructure.
- **AIX to Linux Server Modernization**
Continued effort towards the transition from AIX to Linux servers which is a critical step towards enhancing performance and reliability of key systems like UWinsite. Completion expected by April 2024.
- **Oracle Human Capital Management Review**
Complete existing fit-gap analysis to identify discrepancies between our current HR processes and system, and the modernized capabilities of the prospective Oracle HCM system. This comprehensive approach will ensure: Integration of best practices; Identification and resolution of potential gaps; Establishment of effective governance structures; Readiness of a competent team; Thorough planning of data-related and integration aspects.
- **Network Upgrades**
Complete wireless upgrades in Biology Building, Cartier Hall, and the Stadium will be instrumental in bolstering the University's digital infrastructure, facilitating seamless connectivity, and ensuring robust network performance.
- **Classroom Upgrades**
Complete the AV Upgrades in 6 classrooms through internal IT renewal program and support the renovation of 3 classrooms as part broader of summer capital projects.
- **eGas Rebuild**
The rebuilding of the e-graduate system application, eGas, with professional services support, is a significant step towards improving the graduate application process. The systematic rebuild of eGas supports the goal of streamlining processes and interfaces, providing a more efficient, transparent, and user-friendly application experience.
- **Data Strategy**

Looking ahead, the data strategy will leverage the substantial amount of data gathered from the Aspire Strategic Planning initiative along with professional services engagements. Utilizing insights from Aspire will enable a more informed and strategic approach to data governance, management, and utilization. The focus will be on integrating this data into the ongoing development of the data strategy, ensuring that it aligns with the University's broader strategic goals. Governance committees are scheduled to be mobilized early in 2024

- **Website / Intranet Review**

The review of an updated website and intranet system at the university represents a foundational step in improving internal communication channels and knowledge mobilization. This initiative involves comprehensive analysis and research to understand the specific needs of our diverse campus population, including students, staff, and faculty. This preliminary phase also included a thorough evaluation of current digital assets and an assessment of emerging technological trends, ensuring that the updated platforms will not only meet the immediate needs of our campus community but also be scalable and adaptable for future requirements.

Recommendations for Senate consideration (if any)

No specific recommendations available currently; however, it is recommended that Senate maintains a flexible and agile approach to potential changes upcoming via updated AODA requirements and the challenges and opportunities that are being rapidly presented by Artificial Intelligence.