Unified Communications

IBM and its principal partner, Avaya, have been awarded the unified communications services contract. The Unified Communications Project (UC) will provide the university with modern telephony, unified messaging, mobility, and collaborative capabilities. Main campus and satellite office locations in the Town of Blacksburg and the National Capital Region are the focus of the project.

Avaya is a recognized global leader, using a team of engineering resources to provide a comprehensive portfolio of telephony, messaging, contact center, mobility, and collaboration products. NI&S will work closely with IBM’s Global Technology Services group, an industry-leading group, to plan, design, and manage the project.

UC is just one component of a group of inter-dependent projects to upgrade the university’s critical communications technology. Related projects will improve physical facilities, replace aging copper and fiber-optic cabling in several buildings, and update the overall network infrastructure.

During the first six to eight months, activity will focus on assessment, planning, design, and implementation of the core infrastructure. Migration of users to the new system will occur over the following 18 to 24 months.

Watch http://www.nis.vt.edu/uc/ for updates.

Holiday celebration

Plan to attend Information Technology’s Holiday Reception, December 15 from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at The Inn at Virginia Tech, Latham Ballroom.

InCommon Federation

Virginia Tech faculty and staff members are now able to use single sign-on for InCommon services using the CAS interface. Among the resources available are EDUCAUSE sites requiring login, allowing you to use your PID/password instead of an EDUCAUSE-maintained account. InCommon provides a common, trusted framework for shared access management in U.S. higher education and research.
Crack the code project

During 2011 New Student Orientation, University Computing Support (UCS) unveiled the “Crack the Code” project. The project was designed to promote awareness and increase traffic to educational sites available from Information Technology. Carol Hurley, Manager of Desktop Support, initiated the idea and Jason Hubbard, UCS web developer, developed the application to track sites visited and award prizes.

A QR code is a specific matrix (2-D) barcode readable by dedicated QR barcode readers and camera phones. The code consists of black modules arranged in a square pattern on a white background. The information encoded can be text, URL, or other data.

Most students now carry a mobile device with the ability to read QR codes. Many Android, Nokia, and Blackberry phones come with QR code readers pre-installed. QR reader software is available for most mobile platforms like the iPhone.

A variety of QR codes were created, printed, and placed around campus and at local businesses. When the codes were scanned, they took the user to a website, a video, or a prize. Prizes were donated by local businesses, involving the community in our project. The grand prize, a 7” Dell Streak, was donated by Brian Estes, Virginia Tech’s Dell representative. It was awarded to Robert Mosley, a Business Information major.

Robert reported that he had canvassed campus and downtown, scanning QR codes and searching for prize codes.

The campaign went “viral” with students looking at Information Technology resources while searching for the prize codes! Some of the sites highlighted by the project included www.vtnet.vt.edu, www.answers.vt.edu, Hokie “How To” videos produced by UCS and hosted on YouTube and VT iTunesU, and educational videos on phishing and information technology security.

The outcomes of the project included increased traffic to educational sites, increasing use of self-help tools and potentially lowering call volume to 4Help, branding of the UCS/4Help name, and educating users on security issues such as phishing, identity theft and computer best practices.

Robert Mosley and Joyce Landreth

Winter closing


Information Technology’s index of services, www.computing.vt.edu, is the place to find more information on enterprise-wide, user-facing services. Generally, most of these services will remain available, most with full operational support (operating as though it is a weekend). A few will run unattended; that is, fixes may be delayed until after the closing period. Most in-person service centers will be closed. Both online and in-person service centers that provide requests for new services will not generally be available.

Note that the published lists on computing will only include those focused on university-wide patrons. Internal services and those with highly restricted user base are handled internally. If you have questions, consult your manager.