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COSMOS

Representative Rick Boucher recently highlighted the open source release of COSMOS (<http://cosmos.bev.vt.edu/>), a software package that facilitates social services delivery. (www.vtnews.vt.edu/story.php?relyear=2005&itemno=1040). In a joint press conference, President Steger pointed to the help that the software can bring to data collection that will both streamline processes in social services organizations and make it easier for clients to get access to the services they need. This web application permits social service agencies to perform initial client intake, assessment, and referrals. Information can be shared securely over the web with other service organizations, eliminating duplicative processes

and creating a single uniform client record. COSMOS is the product of collaboration among the Blacksburg Electronic Village (BEV—www.bev.net), who developed the software, and social service agency representatives from the Washington County (Virginia) Department of Social Services and People Incorporated (www.peopleincorp.org/), who provided the requirements. BEV development staff built the system using open source components, including PHP running in a LAMP context. By releasing the software under the GPL open source license, BEV hopes to make it possible for a wider community to use the system and participate in future development.

Banner 7

Banner 7 is being installed as the production system during the weekend of November 12. This upgrade has both technology and functionality enhancements. Information sessions begin October 24 to discuss the new look and feel and some of the newer functionality. Trainers will contact users regarding changes to systems for student administration, human resources, finance, and alumni and development. All AIS teams and the Database Management team are involved in ensuring smooth upgrades to the university’s enterprise system. Information Technology teams that use Banner processes and data, for example, the Data Warehouse and the Registry (Enterprise Directory), also test to ensure smooth transitions.

The methodology used to install upgrades is now long-practiced by the Banner and DBMS teams and by the central office users. This methodology includes installing the delivered software in a development instance for investigation, testing, and updating local enhancements. This longer stage provides an environment for Banner team developers and functional office personnel to work with the upgrade. A shorter pre-launch environment is then created (Pre-Production), followed by moving the new version to production. Following production, the trouble-shooting environment is also upgraded to the new version.

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Educause 2005

Virginia Tech Information Technology professionals make an impact at [Educause 2005](#).

Betsy Blythe, General Enterprise Applications, and Ora Fish (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute) discussed “Decision Support/Data Warehousing.” The session provides solutions for decision-making, strategic planning, and reporting.

The Virginia Alliance for Secure Computing and Networking, recipient of the 2005 Educause Award for Excellence in Information Technology Solutions, is represented by **Wayne Donald**, Information Technology Security Officer, and colleagues Cathy Hubbs (George Mason University), Shirley Payne (University of Virginia), and Darlene Quackenbush (James Madison University). Their presentation, “Institutions as Allies in the Security Challenge,” reviews the benefits of collaboration for improving security.

“By Design: Grassroots Development for Strategic Gains,” was presented by **Shelli Fowler** (GED), **Anne Moore** (Learning Technologies), and **John Moore** (Educational Technologies). This presentation represents the Educause Award for Systemic Progress in Teaching & Learning. The presentation describes the suite of programs—the Faculty Development Institute, the Graduate Education Development Institute, and the Center for Innovation in learning—that has moved Virginia Tech forward in integrating technology with learning.

John Moore and **Eddie Watson** (Educational Technologies; FDI) described efforts to maintain value in FDI in “Keeping Faculty Development Relevant: Leading and Responding to Institutional Change.”

Beth Fisher, ITA, convened the pre-conference seminar, “Building Relationships Means Better IT Contracts: Practical Contracting Strategies.” The seminar provides training in negotiations and on building relationships with vendors, lawyers, and administrators.

In addition, information technology and learning specialists from Virginia Tech’s colleges presented—**Deborah Olsen**, et al., “Evaluating a Virtual Academic Department”; and **Cheryl Peed**, **Glenda Scales**, and **Emet La Boone**, “Providing Distance Learning with New Tools for the VT/WFU Biomedical Engineering and Science School.”

Publications

The [2005 Information Technology Annual Report](#) is posted at [it.vt.edu](#). The full report provides a wealth of information on the IT organizations.

[IT Reference Guide](#) is a new publication for Virginia Tech employees. The printed publication is being distributed to university employees. The guide is posted on [computing.vt.edu](#), with hyperlinks to more detailed information. If you find errors or have suggestions for improvements for next year’s guide, please e-mail infotech@vt.edu.

Information Technology at Virginia Tech

Vice President for Information
Technology
Earving Blythe
1700 Kraft Drive, Mailstop
0169

Phone: 540-231-4227
Website: www.it.vt.edu

Information Security and Privacy in Today's Envi- ronment: Major Chal- lenges and Effective Strategies

The second annual [VASCAN conference](#) will be held October 24-25 at James Madison University. Keynote speakers are Howard Schmidt (R&H Security Consulting), addressing “Cyber Security—Strategies that Work,” and Martha Stansell-Gamm (U.S. Department of Justice, Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section) who will speak to “Hackers, Phishers, Feds, and You.”