

LOGO GOES
HERE

IT Newsletter

March 2004

Volume 1, Issue 1

An Information Technology Newsletter

The purpose of the IT Newsletter is to share information among the units and projects within Information Technology. A regular means of featuring accomplishments and projects can help us take advantage of synergies and complementary projects.

Find information

- answers.vt.edu
- computing.vt.edu
- [CNS FAQs](#)
- [Online Course Support](#)
- [Element K](#)
- security.vt.edu
- antivirus.vt.edu

Name the Newsletter —create a logo!

The newsletter needs a name! We could borrow from Maryland—*TechKnow*, or from UVA—*Spam on Wry*. Nike might not smile on “*Just Do IT!*” (from Wisconsin’s “**D**ivision of **I**nformation **T**echnology.”) So we need our own name and logo, and what better way than a contest!

Contest rules: Send your entries for a newsletter name, a logo or both to srb144. Entries will be judged in a subjective and potentially arbitrary and capricious way by a committee chaired by Jeb Stewart. The prize is Erv Blythe’s voice on your work voice mail message!

ECS-WAS

ECS-WAS—the E-Communications Services-Windows Administration Services Team of Systems Engineering & Administration—is led by William Dougherty. Team members are Doug Edmonds, Ron Jarrell, Ted Leinhardt, Dave Martin, Mike Moyer, Cathy Winfrey, and John Worrell.

The team manages e-mail and calendaring services, including the POP server, virus scanners, Webmail, Exchange, the News Server, and listserv. ECS-WAS administers Windows servers in support of administrative applications, maintains the Central Services, CC, and AIS Domain controllers, and provides liaison for DNS updates.

In the past two years, the team has upgraded the POP server software and hardware; assisted users transitioning from Meeting Maker to Exchange calendaring; upgraded Webmail; upgraded the virus scanners; added spam filtering software to the virus scanners; and upgraded other production servers.

ECS-WAS is a key partner in deploying the Enterprise Directory (ED). ED completes an initiative to “decouple” e-mail from other university online services, especially as they interact for authentication and authorization purposes. Now, individuals may be flexibly provided with PIDs without authorization for e-mail.

Spam and viruses continue as major concerns. Users can now filter “junk mail” into a separate folder. Although over 4,000 sites are currently blocked from the VT.EDU domain, enough still comes through that client side filtering is helpful. ECS-WAS staff monitor logs to identify other hosts that may warrant blocking, and suggestions from users are considered. [\[See the answers.vt.edu article.\]](http://answers.vt.edu)

In addition to helping manage spam, the virus scanners continue to perform their original purpose: preventing viruses from infecting computers of faculty, staff, and students. After the “MyDoom” onslaught which clogged the mail server queues when over 750,000 viruses were captured in less than 4 hours, new processes have been devised to handle virus attacks. These include blocking certain attachment types, no longer delivering the cleaned e-mail note, and “throttling” incoming mail to ensure processing can take place before file systems overflow.

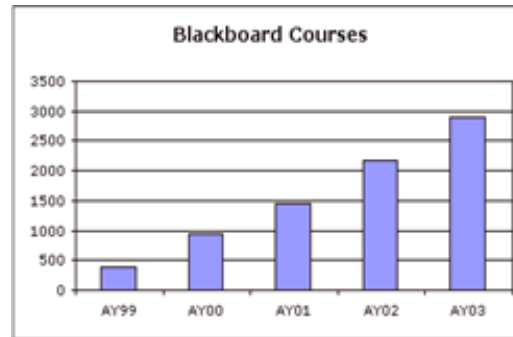
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Blackboard statistics

The use of Blackboard course management system has increased significantly over the past several years. More than 2800 course sections are served through Blackboard each academic year, including distance learning classes. Over 25,000 students have active accounts, with undergraduates enrolled in an average of 3.5 Blackboard courses per semester.

Online Course support answered over 7000 faculty-generated questions last year.



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Advanced networking—National LambdaRail

National LambdaRail, Inc. (NLR), a consortium of U.S. research universities, regional and national advanced networking organizations, and Cisco Systems, is deploying a new national optical networking infrastructure. The purpose of the infrastructure is to foster the advancement of networking research and next-generation, network-based applications in science, engineering, and medicine, and to re-energize innovative research and development into next-generation network technologies, protocols, services, and applications.

By owning the resource, participating research institutions seek to remove the barriers of sharing the network. Dedicating the system to research permits very large files to be transferred quickly. The participating institutions provide the funding for the effort. The infrastructure has largely been crafted from so-called "dark" fiber—those lines that had been installed in anticipation of high demand, but that were never connected in the telecommunications "bust." The changing market conditions made the fiber more affordable than it had been previously.

In November 2003, NLR "lit" the first segment of this previously dark cable—the segment between Chicago and Pittsburgh. The segment which runs between Seattle and Portland, Oregon was completed in January 2004. Other segments to be enabled soon: Portland to Sunnyvale, California, Pittsburgh to Washington D.C., and Washington D.C. to Atlanta. By the end of 2004, the schedule calls for completed paths between Denver and Seattle, Atlanta and Jacksonville, Chicago and Denver, Atlanta and Dallas, Dallas and San Diego; and, Washington D.C. and New York City.

Virginia Tech participates through its involvement with MATP—the Mid-Atlantic Terascale Partnership. MATP is a consortium of research institutions in Virginia, Maryland, and Washington formed to support research activities that require next-generation high-performance network connectivity. In addition, Erv Blythe serves on the Board of Directors of the NLR.

Additional information:
<http://www.nationallambdarail.org>

Founding members of MATP include Virginia Tech, the University of Virginia, Old Dominion University, Virginia Commonwealth University, George Mason University, the College of William and Mary, and associate member Oak Ridge Associated Universities.