

January 2023

Office of the Chief Information Officer Update

Winter Recess Leveraged for Work to Keep Northeastern Systems Running Smoothly, Securely, and Reliably for Global University Community: Throughout the winter break, necessary work was performed on the university's technology to continue supporting the Northeastern community and to scale to support the expanding global network. Below are highlights of some of what was accomplished during the recess:

- Fiberoptic cable was proactively replaced in 151 Boston classrooms to provide higher reliability of classroom A/V ahead of the spring semester.
- A system-wide database upgrade was performed on Sites at Northeastern, the university's self-service web publishing platform, to ensure continued, performant availability of the more than 2,000 websites hosted through the service.
- Several updates were made to the online Wellness Days service—an offering that provides students the ability to self-service elect excused absence from class—including the addition of black-out dates and a balance remaining counter, both designed to ease students' ability to make more informed absence decisions.
- The IT Service Desk maintained 24/7 operations supporting 1,200+ customer interactions between December 23 and January 2.
- Networking and integrations were implemented to support Facilities Management in providing door access and HuskyCard services within the Sheraton housing space ahead of the spring semester.
- Over 450 wireless access points and 26 switches were installed on 26 floors to provide high-speed and reliable connectivity at the new residence facility at 39 Dalton.
- Support was provided to the London campus to change their domain from nchlondon.ac.uk to nulondon.ac.uk, including updates to London's VPN, Wi-Fi, and Zoom services.
- Major upgrades were made to both hardware and software that support the Global Wireless service to maintain support and reliability across the global network.
- In preparation for the spring opening of the new Charlotte location, work continued to ready multiple new classrooms, including AV cabling, component installation, and documentation.
- More than a dozen additional network-related upgrades, installs, and maintenances were performed across multiple global locations, including Arlington, Boston, Charlotte, Oakland, and Portland.
- In preparation for the phased closure of Snell Library spaces during the renovation, updates were made to the Spaces at Northeastern website to provide students with information about open, drop-in spaces available on the Boston campus.
- In conjunction with colleagues in Mail and Copy service on the Oakland campus, new package lockers were configured, speeding students' ability to receive and self-service pick-up important mail and packages.

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Banner Releases Reduce Institutional Risk and Keep Northeastern Compliant with Vendor Requirements and Federal Tax Regulations: Earlier this month, the application servers for the university's Banner ERP infrastructure were migrated to Linux. This migration improves the university's security stance for these servers and keeps Northeastern in compliance with vendor software requirements. The move to the open, modern operating system also means that portions of the Banner infrastructure can be migrated to the cloud. Major releases to the Banner systems were also completed this month to keep the university compliant with updated tax regulations, including 1099 and 1098T reporting. To limit the impact of system outages during the releases, staff in ITS worked closely with business partners throughout the institution (including the Office of the Registrar, Finance, and Student Accounts) to plan the releases and navigate year-end processes, tax reporting deadlines, and start-of-term activities.

New Classroom Dashboard Prepares Instructors with Personalized Resources and Statuses: Instructors, administrators, and others can now find a dashboard of over 300 Boston and Oakland registrar-managed classrooms, including resources and information about the technology in each one. The [classroom dashboard](#) is publicly hosted on the Tech Service Portal on the ServiceNow platform, but when an instructor who is assigned to any of the classrooms is logged in, a personalized list of their classrooms and any current maintenance work or A/V issues is featured front and center for convenient access. The new classroom dashboard leverages data feeds from the Registrar, Facilities, and ITS to help better prepare faculty members to teach in their classroom and leverage the technology available to them.

Flooding Remediation and Mitigation Activities Protect Systems and Data in Oakland: Oakland-based ITS team members, in conjunction with partners including Facilities Management, took quick action to protect systems and data in the Oakland data center and throughout campus, following historic storms in the Bay Area that led to two-inches of standing water in the data center. Following the initial flooding and remediation, the teams took additional steps to mitigate against future water intrusion from the ongoing storms, including further elevating sensitive equipment and cables, backing up critical systems and data to another location, and reviewing and updating continuity plans for the data center and associated technical systems. Proactive reviews of network closets and other campus technology were also performed to identify any storm damage or potential for damage.

By the Numbers, IT Service Desk Supports Start of Spring Semester: To kick-off spring semester classes and activities, the global university community leveraged the knowledge and assistance of IT Service Desk professionals by calling, chatting, emailing, and walking-up for support. In the first five days of the spring semester, the service desk fielded more than 3,000 interactions from university community members. More than 20% of interactions came in via chat, which is an increasingly preferred method for support. In addition to call, chat, email, and walk-up options, text messaging is also being explored as a future added method of support.

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Transition to New Calling System Expands Capabilities and Reduces Costs for Enrollment Management:

Enrollment Management and ITS collaborated to transition automated call distribution system vendors from Five9 to 3CLogic. Enrollment Management's ACD system is used to connect with students, family members, and other audiences across 16 high-traffic support phone numbers including for Admissions, CPS, OGS, SFS, and the main university call center. The transition was accomplished on schedule under a tight 3.5-month timeframe, and it provides these areas greater integration with ServiceNow and a significant annual cost savings. ITS was the first university area to move to 3CLogic in 2020. For ITS, the integrations with ServiceNow and other university systems cut customer call wait times in half while enabling service desk agents to immediately identify callers and pre-fill information about a caller (including their call history) so that agents can more rapidly assist callers and provide a personalized experience.

Mock Assessment Helps University Prepare for Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC)

Compliance Audit: Information Security and Kostas Research Institute, LLC partnered recently on a mock assessment as part of final preparation for seeking CMMC level 2 certification. This trial run gave the ITS and KRI teams the opportunity to experience the auditing process and assess what steps need to be taken prior to the actual government audit anticipated by late summer. The CMMC audit is required by the federal government to ensure that Northeastern meets the strict cybersecurity compliance regulations needed to work with controlled unclassified information, and so that the institution can continue its Department of Defense contracts and other government-funded research.

Central Tracking of IT Assets with New ServiceNow Module Increases Operational Efficiencies While Reducing Costs and Risk:

ServiceNow's Hardware Asset Management module launched the evening of Jan. 25, 2023, to facilitate greater operational efficiencies for the institution through automation. The HAM software can standardize asset data and tracking of IT assets, including university-managed laptops, loaner equipment through the Service Desk, and network infrastructure equipment. Using HAM, ITS can now view available inventory in various stockrooms, will receive "re-order" notifications when minimum inventory thresholds have been met, and can track asset age to inform automatic-replacement cycles. The launch of HAM will lead to a reduction of costs and risks associated with hardware inventory management while increasing customer satisfaction throughout the hardware lifecycle.

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