March 2023
Office of the Chief Information Officer Update

Improved electronic conflict disclosure system supports Office of General Counsel and university community: Staff in ITS worked with the Office of General Counsel to plan, build, and test enhancements to the system supporting the annual conflict disclosure compliance for this academic year. These improvements address suggestions stemming from a recent audit and provide functionality found in commercial conflict of interest systems available in the market. For instance, the most important and useful feature was the ability for the form to adjust questions based on the previous question's response. The new functionality and operational improvements help streamline the process for the community submitting the form, as well as for the form's administrators.

Global IT teams upgrade wireless infrastructure to improve campus guest experience: Business stakeholders and IT staff across the London, Boston, and Oakland campuses collaborated on an upgrade that simplifies guest access to wireless services at all campus locations. Teams extended the access to allow guests up to 30 days of wireless service at a time. Previously, guests were required to create a new access code every day to connect to the campus network. This upgrade significantly eases the burden on guests, as well as their campus hosts, and allows for more effective collaboration and productivity.

Incident Management training rolled out to ITS to help enhance operational excellence, lower resolution times, and increase customer satisfaction: Approximately 265 ITS staff members received incident management training over the course of three days and six live sessions in late February, fulfilling an audit requirement and providing staff with additional knowledge, tools, and resources for properly handling, prioritizing, and communicating IT incidents according to institutional processes. Using multiple baseline key performance metrics for comparison, the training is expected to help improve operational efficiencies, reduce the number and length of service disruptions, and increase overall customer satisfaction.

Digital project kicks-off to support Northeastern's new EXP building makerspace: The Office of the Provost and ITS are partnering to develop and launch a new website and companion digital tools to support the new EXP makerspace and reflect the uniqueness and importance of the physical location set to open for fall 2023. The new website, which will be hosted on the university's modern web hosting service, will be focused on attracting students to use the space while highlighting promotional elements aimed at industry partners. In addition to the website, the university's enterprise service management tool, ServiceNow, along with related digital tools, will be leveraged to provide users of the makerspace convenient and self-service access to online training to become certified on makerspace tools and reserve those tools and spaces.

Move of Bachelors-Completion website to new cloud hosting speeds access and reduces risk: As part of an ongoing effort to modernize university website systems and services, the Bachelors-Completion website was recently successfully migrated from Northeastern's aging on-premises server environment to the institution's modern, cloud-based enterprise web hosting service. This move helps increase the reliability and security of a highly-visible, revenue-driving website that sees more than one million visitors a year, while also decreasing site loading time by 60%–ultimately creating a better user experience and higher-SEO value. The Bachelors-Completion website joins the more than 500 websites that have been migrated off the university's legacy web servers, enabling a 54% reduction in on-premises web servers to-date, and helping the university reduce technical debt, risk, and cost.

Project kicking off to establish a more robust Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery Program: In collaboration with business units throughout the university, including Public Safety, IT Services is establishing a more robust Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery Program. A formalized BCDR Program helps ensure business operational resumption after an outage or disruption, mitigates risk of data loss, and protects the university against reputational damages. This essential program will support the university's expanded campus footprint and global reach to ensure continuity of critical products, services, and applications when major natural or human-caused disruptive events occur.

Deployment of Spring 2023 voting form supports fair and reliable student government voting process: Leveraging the Outsystems enterprise platform, IT teams developed and delivered an updated voting form for the Student Government Association's annual vote. The project team collaborated with SGA representatives to capture business requests and updates, demo the changes, and release the final product so that it is available for fair voting for student government representatives. New functionality added this year include added logic for no confidence voting, so that if only one candidate is standing for election, a no confidence message is displayed at the start of the candidate slates. Logic was also added to disable other voting options when a candidate is written in.

Expanding global campus and supporting increasing student needs in Seattle: IT teams supported the ongoing expansion of the global campus in Seattle with a complete data communications buildout at 225 Terry Ave., 2nd floor. This work provides state of the art wireless connectivity with increased Wi-Fi speed, four new Global Learning Spaces classrooms, and seven additional breakout spaces. As a result, the infrastructure now supports up to 20 additional students per class and hundreds more personal devices on the wireless network.

Simplifying and optimizing access to Research Computing resources for teaching and learning across the global campus: An initiative is underway to automate the request process and provisioning of high-performance computing (HPC) resources for classroom use, which benefits around 1,000 students each year who need to use HPC resources as a part of their coursework. The provisioning of user access, groups, and storage are all being automated. At the same time, the request form is being updated, with the help of a Canvas integration recently developed by ITS, to further improve and simplify the experience for professors, instructors, and teaching faculty requesting resources. Additionally, HPC usage is being standardized and compute environments are being tailored for courses.

Increasing numbers of women employed at ITS tops IT industry average for gender diversity: According to demographic data collected in recognition of March as Women's History Month, women employees in ITS account for over 32% of the division's full-time workforce. This percentage is up from 25% in 2018 and is above the IT industry average of 26%, as reported by Gartner, the respected business and technology research firm. This trend in ITS aligns with Northeastern's commitment to building a diverse and inclusive university community, and is part of ITS' ongoing efforts to amplify voices and initiatives that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion as best practice.

Employee Hub announced, providing all Northeastern employees better and easier access to what they need to be successful in their roles: In a joint effort between IT Services and Human Resources, the Employee Hub was formally introduced to Northeastern employees on Monday, March 27 as the new digital home base for faculty and staff. An expansion of the Student Hub that launched in 2020, the Employee Hub provides quicker, easier access to many of the productivity tools and other resources that employees need to navigate day-to-day university and work life most effectively. Daily site visits to the Employee Hub, which replaces and builds upon the myNortheastern employee portal that will retire as of June 1, 2023, were up three times in the days immediately following the announcement.

Banner 9 pre-requisite upgrades completed for Banner financial aid module migration: The completion of all pre-requisite upgrades in Banner marked a significant milestone in the project to migrate Student Financial Services off of the current financial aid system, Powerfaids. This milestone puts the university one step closer to the expected transition to Banner Financial Aid starting with the incoming class of students this fall 2023. This work will result in a more stable and integrated platform for this critical university function, which awards approximately $1B in financial aid each year.

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