

April 2024

Office of the Chief Information Officer Update

Northeastern hosts 150 Boston-area students, with support from Academic Technologies team, for a hackathon exploring ways in which AI can solve pressing problems in higher education: Members of the Academic Technologies staff supported the InnovAIte: AINU X BAIC hackathon, an event organized by the undergraduate AI clubs at Northeastern and Babson to solving problems in edtech with AI. InnovAIte took place on the Northeastern campus March 30-31, bringing nearly 150 students to campus to explore ways that AI might address pressing problems in higher education, focusing on issues such as accessibility, degree completion/retention, and career preparation. Members of the AT staff provided the students with instructional design support and judging and appeared on a panel about AI and edtech.

ITS provides critical support for AI in Action, a collaborative initiative by the Offices of the Provost and Chancellor, empowering over 2700 registrants around the global network with insights into AI research and practice: Multiple teams around ITS contributed to the successful launch of AI in Action Week 2024, contributing hours of training, technical support, and solution-oriented efforts with positive outcomes for the organizers, instructors, and learners alike. The conference leverages existing ITS-supported teaching and classroom technologies, including the Canvas learning management system, Microsoft Teams, DesignPLUS Canvas functionality, badging, and Global Learning Spaces A/V functionalities. ITS provided extensive training and consultations, covering effective use of Canvas for staff within the Provost's Office and the Chancellor's Office, pre-event Q&A sessions for presenters, Microsoft Teams for staff and presenters, and Global Learning Spaces. Over 600 learners have already completed the requirements for the Introductory AI Literacy Badge, and over 1300 learners per day have engaged virtually with events. All 2700 registrants, including 730 guests from outside Northeastern, will have ongoing access to recordings and resources related to the diverse sessions illustrating how to use AI effectively.

Promising passwordless pilot sets stage for wider rollout that will reduce risk of compromised accounts and enhance login experience across the university: The Office of Information Security is piloting the transition from Duo to Microsoft Authenticator for passwordless authentication with the HRIT group. This is a follow up to testing and pilots within ITS and puts the university a significant step closer to rolling this service out to the broader university community. As part of this pilot, members of the HRIT test group was able to register their mobile devices, download the Authenticator app, and enable passwordless on their own with minimal difficulty. Passwordless authentication eliminates the need for people to remember and enter their password when logging into Northeastern services, reducing the risk of account compromise attacks. Moving to Microsoft Authenticator will also provide cost savings to Northeastern related to Duo license fees and telephony spend.

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Historic performance venue on Oakland campus receives modern AV upgrades that enhance programming in the space while reducing costs and labor: ITS completed the installation and setup of a new projector and display in the Oakland campus's Littlefield Concert Hall at the end of March. This venue, which has a one-of-a-kind acoustic environment and long history of hosting performance and creative work, didn't previously have functional audio-visual equipment. This means that staff and event hosts no longer have to rent a projector and other equipment. Enhanced live streaming features, such as adding presentation content into the productions, is now more easily accomplished. Littlefield is the largest capacity venue on the Oakland campus, routinely hosting signature events such as orientations, commencement activities, and fundraising functions, while also serving as a highlight of campus tours.

Redesigned internet access circuit for the Boston campus increases internet bandwidth while also providing \$45,000 annual savings: The ITS Communications Infrastructure Engineering team redesigned an internet access circuit for the university's Boston campus that both allows more data to flow through and lowers costs. Previously, the internet access circuit for the Boston campus went through Marlboro to Worcester with a 2G limit over a Crown Castle circuit. The redesign allows the university to disconnect the \$4,500/month Crown Castle circuit by connecting directly to the internet in Marlboro. This raises internet access capacity to 10G—an 8G increase to bandwidth—while reducing overage charges. This is expected to save the university approximately \$45,000 per year going forward.

Technology lending lockers expand service, bringing short-term loans of computers and other technology to students, faculty, and staff on the Oakland campus: In conjunction with Planning Real Estate and Facilities, ITS has completed the installation of hardware lending lockers in The Rothwell Center on the Oakland campus. This expands Northeastern's technology lending service, first launched in Boston in September 2020, to the West Coast. Oakland students, faculty, and staff can now use smart lockers for contactless pickup and return of loaned technology items, such as laptops, projectors, 360 degree video cameras, and other small, high-end technology. These lockers allow for self-service through the Tech Service Portal for those looking to borrow these items, empowering our community to address their technology hardware needs 24x7x365. Vending machines for even smaller items, such as adaptors and chargers, will be installed next. Since implementing technology lending lockers in Boston in September 2020, over 9,800 unique customers have borrowed 20,946 items from the lockers and 7,414 items from vending machines.

Legacy NUGO mobile app retired to address security vulnerabilities, reduce technical debt, and save development costs and hours: IT teams have ended support for the mobile application NUGO and removed it from the Apple and Google Play app stores. The Student Hub supports all features and data that students would have found in NUGO and the mobile app's traffic was already extremely low, helping to support the decision to discontinue the app and consolidate the tech stack. This effort was fast tracked to address recently identified security vulnerabilities and avoid the significant developer hours and code updates needed to update the app, work that was estimated would have cost the university \$8,400. Since NUGO didn't collect any user data, only displayed it, the decommissioning process took just 30 minutes to complete. The decision to end support for the app also relieves the product team of the AWS resources and hosting costs needed to support the APIs and database, totaling approximately \$1,000/month.

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