March 2024
Office of the Chief Information Officer Update

Upgrade to the identity card and access control system supports better Husky Card experience and provides more options and flexibility to business units: On March 5, 2024, ITS upgraded the Gold ID Card and Access Control system that powers Husky Card services. The upgrade, from 8.0.10 to 8.0.11, brings several benefits that enhance the experience for both cardholders and university business areas. Thanks to performance improvements in this upgrade, cardholder info now synchronizes to the newest door lock controllers, used in Boston's EXP building and the Charlotte and Oakland campuses, 60% faster than before the upgrade. The system also now supports expanded meal plan code mapping options and Web Manager platform applications for Facilities and Housing Residence Directors, giving those business areas more flexibility and self-service options for managing their business operations. Additionally, the upgrade offers support for preferred names, which will enable the university to integrate preferred names from Banner as part of an upcoming project.

ITS hosted highly engaging webinar for Northeastern's Global Network during which Gartner executive research analyst presented and explored the landscape of generative AI in higher education: The Office of the CIO hosted a session on March 7 exploring AI's impact on higher education presented by Gartner Executive Partner David Bruce for Northeastern's Global Network and Strategic Initiatives. This session delved into the potentials and challenges of AI, touching on privacy, security, and compliance concerns, and addressed attendee-submitted questions that included bias in AI and the spread of misinformation. Over 160 attendees across nine campuses gained valuable insight into AI use cases for education and engaged in thoughtful discussion. Each campus and unit leader also received AI in Education discussion prompts to be used to facilitate smaller, follow-up dialogues for beginning to understand needs and concerns and assess impact and readiness. The presentation is a benefit of the university's partnership with Gartner, a leading research advisory firm, through which all Northeastern faculty, staff, and students have access to the Gartner GenAI resource center and an expansive IT research library rich in technology-focused topics.

Migration of billing system for Canadian campuses to CIBC/Banner Billing simplifies and standardizes student billing processes while saving university annual licensing costs associated with legacy system: Earlier this month, the university replaced Financial Force, the legacy billing system used for Canadian campuses, and migrated to the current CIBC/Banner Billing solution for non-Canadian students with conversion rates for Canadian currency. Financial Force was a complex system requiring significant manual intervention. This migration not only standardizes non-Canadian and Canadian billing processes but simplifies the Canadian process by eliminating time-consuming manual processes such as matching cash payments and adding student holds. This also improves internal controls such as the posting of payments, reduces complexity from an operational and code maintenance perspective, and saves the university approximately $45,000 annually in licensing costs.

ITS partners with London campus to train and support employees transitioning meetings to Microsoft Teams, the university's global communication tool for administrative and business meetings: On March 11, 2024, Northeastern faculty and staff in London transitioned to using Microsoft Teams, the global university's video-conferencing software, for all administrative/professional work-related meetings. This is a step on the journey towards simplifying and aligning systems across the Northeastern global community. In addition to providing a more consistent technology experience, this change will make it easier for London colleagues to collaborate with other Northeastern colleagues across the network, fostering improved communication, collaboration, and productivity. The Digital University Solutions Training Team conducted three virtual training sessions, equipping the 165 London faculty and staff who attended with essential skills in Microsoft Teams, Microsoft Teams Add-on for Google Calendar, and Microsoft Teams Meetings. This effort builds on the automated sponsored account process rolled out in August 2023 that provides every London employee a northeastern.edu account with access to resources that their colleagues on other campuses have.

Current phase of the Technology Infrastructure Improvement Program (TIIP) is improving connectivity on the Boston campus for teaching, learning, and business. Early work is slated to finish next month well ahead of schedule, freeing up resources for other key work and projects: The Technology Infrastructure Improvement Program (TIIP) phase 2 project kicked off February 26, which includes the replacement of wireless access points in 22 academic and administrative buildings on the Boston campus. The AP replacement work was estimated to be completed on June 10, but due to the efficient work by ITS's Communications Infrastructure team, the project manager, and the contractor, 90% more access points have been installed than estimated at this point. The new estimated completion date of this scope of the project is now April 15. This is the result of effective on-site coordination–particularly regarding access to labs and other locked spaces, advanced communications and meetings with college and administrative stakeholders, and a new mounting plate that reduces installation time. Completing the access point installations early frees up resources to focus on the other parts of the project, other projects, and on customers.

Legacy myNortheastern portals and the Liferay system fully retired, completing the transition to the Hubs, reducing technical debt, and providing university annual savings: On March 21 as the final milestone of a multi-year effort, ITS shut down the remaining access to the myNortheastern portal and the legacy, end-of-support Liferay system that powered the portals. The retirement of the Liferay system reduces technical debt and complexity in the IT stack and helps save the university $63,000 annually. Prior to this, parents and families were the final community with access to the portal but had largely been using the newer alternative, Family Hub, which had been announced on February 5. Over 95% of family traffic to my.northeastern.edu was opting to log in to the Family Hub instead of the myNortheastern Parent Portal. Students and employees have been fully transitioned to the Student Hub and Employee Hub, respectively, for a year or more.

Transition to ServiceNow ITSM allows London IT team to support the London community more efficiently and to better collaborate with IT teams around the global network: This month, the London-based IT team transitioned to ServiceNow for IT Service Management, allowing their staff to better manage and more efficiently receive and handle support inquiries. Previously, they leveraged email for support tasks, but ServiceNow allows for better collaboration with the rest of Northeastern's ITS staff, such as networking, who were already using ServiceNow. London IT staff can now also easily manage and track customer requests, report on types of requests, and collaborate with the rest of the IT organization. This is part of ongoing work to more fully integrate the London campus with Northeastern's systems and resources.

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