Michele Norin Chosen Education CIO of the Year

The Arizona Technology Council has named the recipient for its Education Chief Information Officer (CIO) of the Year award to be bestowed this week. The University of Arizona’s CIO, Michele Norin, has been selected to receive the honor.

MORE pg 2

UAConnect User Survey Results Announced

More than three quarters of UA faculty and staff who migrated to The University’s UAConnect e-mail and calendaring system are satisfied with the transition. That is just one of the results gathered from a recent survey of campus users of the cloud-based e-mail system. The UAConnect system, which includes a larger inbox, instant messaging capabilities, tools for online meetings and several other new features, replaces the previous WebMail system and Meeting Maker calendar program.

MORE pg 2

Technology Showcase and Network Managers Mini Conference Popular

Approximately 120 people attended the 16th annual Technology and Instruction Showcase on May 5, according to the Office of Instructional Assessment’s (OIA) event organizer Garry Forger. The showcase is an opportunity to demonstrate how instructional technologies are integrated into classes and to share how-to’s and best practices.

Many of the attendees were attracted to this year’s headline topic: Going Mobile. “This was the first time that we had a session on mobile apps,” said Forger. “The attendees showed a lot of interest in the apps that were being highlighted, and in the concept of mobile apps in general.”

MORE pg 3
UAConnect Survey
About 5,800 users have switched to the new system so far.

Last month, the UAConnect project team surveyed the new users to gauge their satisfaction level with the service.

“We’ve had about a third of campus users convert to UAConnect at this point,” says Julie Suess, UAConnect Project Manager. “We think it’s very important to take a read of how satisfied our users are with the system.”

38% of UAConnect users responded to the survey. While eight out of ten respondents report being at least satisfied with the new e-mail, when respondents are separated by computer platform, the results are more telling.

“PC users with Windows and Microsoft Outlook are generally very happy,” reports Kate Rehkopf, associate director of client services. “But when we began looking at Mac users in particular, we found much lower satisfaction levels.”

After the survey results were gathered, the vendor of the system, Microsoft, installed a software fix to help Macintosh users. Users had been experiencing issues ranging from intermittent delays in sending and receiving mail to difficulties in connecting to their mailboxes. Users may also have received “HTTP Error. Resource not found” or “The Exchange 2007 connection to your server failed” error messages. Frequently, messages were diverted to the Drafts folder rather than being delivered to the recipient. The new fix is intended to correct these errors.

“We heard from our Macintosh users loud and clear that they had some dissatisfaction with the new system,” says Patti Fastje, an assistant director with UITS. “We are working with Microsoft to improve the experience for our non-Windows users.”

While the survey results are being analyzed, further migrations to UAConnect have been temporarily put on hold.

“Our team is committed to meeting the needs and exceeding the expectations of UAConnect users,” says Rehkopf. “We are working directly with Microsoft to address the issues raised in the survey. Until we solidify just what those solutions will entail, we hesitate to have anyone else switch over because we want everyone’s experience to be the best it can be,” she adds.

CIO of the Year
The award is part of the council’s fifth annual Business & IT Summit slated to take place this Thursday at the Hilton Scottsdale Resort & Spa. The CIO of the Year Awards luncheon honors individual technology executives from industry, non-profit, education and government. Nominees are recognized for their innovation and creativity in planning and deploying their enterprise systems, future IT goals, management philosophy and service to the industry and community.

Norin serves as the CIO for the University of Arizona and executive director for University Information Technology Services (UITS) at the university. In this role she earned the confidence of the campus, the President’s Cabinet and the Arizona Board of Regents to launch a comprehensive replacement of the university’s aging enterprise systems, the Mosaic Project. Under Norin’s guidance and management the project continues to be implemented on time and on budget and is a best-practice, gold standard for enterprise replacement projects across all IT domains, not just higher education. Norin keeps systems running smoothly, advances UA’s technology services and drives transformation for increased efficiencies despite the tough economy.

E-mail Satisfaction by User Computer Platform

In this graph of survey results, most PC users are satisfied with UA’s new e-mail system while Macintosh users report lower levels of satisfaction. Graph courtesy of UITS Research Computing
Technology Showcase
Members of the Arizona Mobile project team presented in the poster session. They displayed mockups of Arizona Mobile app designs and demonstrated components of the apps that are currently in development such as UA Phonebook, Campus Map, Course Schedule, and UA News.

“People were really excited and curious,” said Lynette Chaudoin, the Arizona Mobile project team lead. “Some of them were eager to share experiences: ‘Oh, you’re developing mobile apps? We are, too.’ Others just wanted to see what’s coming,” she added. Arizona Mobile is expected to go live by the end of this month.

Others from the project team at the showcase included UITS Assistant Director of Applications Management Laurel Wadlund, and Misha Harrison, Assistant Director of Marketing at Student Affairs. The Arizona Mobile project is a partnership between Student Affairs and UITS, with significant contributions from External Relations, Design, and Construction.

The discussion about creating mobile apps for UA has been in the works between Student Affairs and UITS for two years. With the rise of students using smartphones and other mobile devices, Student Affairs was concerned that the standard website interface for campus information is not always the most convenient way to access it. Having features such as the campus map, course information, athletics schedules, meal plan balances, campus events, phonebook, and more, in a mobile app format will be extremely helpful to students on the go.

Visitors, faculty, staff, and alumni will also benefit by using the apps.

The first annual Net Managers Mini Conference also occurred May 5, in partnership with the Technology Showcase. Matt Harmon, chair of UA NetManagers, planned the conference with the assistance of a committee as an opportunity for campus IT staff to share work that they’ve completed for the University with their peers. He, too, was pleased with the turnout. At one point, the room was standing room only.

“We don’t often get to see the whole picture on the campus network,” said Harmon, “so the net managers were very interested.” He was referring to a presentation by Dragana Vasic, UITS Assistant Director of Infrastructure Development, who outlined the devices used in the campus network’s layers, current configurations, speeds, ports density, and current Internet connectivity.

Michael Bruck, Assistant Director of Research Computing at UITS, also presented at the Mini Conference, describing the High Performance Computing/High Throughput Computing hardware refresh happening this summer, and data storage services available centrally to University researchers.

The ITCats Toastmasters Club had a display at the Mini Conference and invitations for IT staff to attend a meeting to learn more about professional development through Toastmasters.

“Since this was the first time for the Net Managers Mini Conference, I had no idea what the response would be,” said Harmon, “but we definitely want to do this again next year.”

Garry Forger agreed. “This first year working with the Net Managers was an experiment, but everyone was very positive about it. We would be very happy to partner with them again.”
The 24/7 IT Support Center is now taking online support requests through UAssist, our new online support request service that provides more features for tech support staff and for users.

Developing UAssist involved upgrading the Remedy ticketing system to Remedy version 7.6, and configuring it for the 24/7, a project led by IT Manager Víctor Cordero, along with Lindsey Lee, Michael Hirst, Ryan Tomkus, and Chen Lee.

In UAssist, users can submit a support request, add more information to that request, and check on work status by going to uassist.arizona.edu. Technical consultants at the 24/7 will use UAssist to enter a support request for users who call in their issues. The system will store all UAssist requests tied to the user’s NetID—entered online or called in to the 24/7—even after work on the request has been completed. It will not contain histories of requests made before the May 23 go-live.

With the implementation of the UAssist system, the 24/7 is planning to retire support @email.arizona.edu as a means to submit requests. Members of the campus community are still welcome to walk in to MLK 207 for IT support.

Patrick Walters chosen ITCats Toastmaster of the Year

With his young daughter, Brigett, cheering him on, Patrick Walters, a Technology Support Analyst Senior at UITS, was recently honored as an “Outstanding Toastmaster” at a ceremony in Phoenix. For Patrick, it was in stark contrast to confidence issues that held him back from opportunities in the past.

“I would get so nervous during job interviews that I actually just walked out in the middle of one. It was like, ‘Sorry guys, I just can’t do this,’” Patrick recalls.

The turning point for Patrick was the chance to join Toastmasters, an organization that has helped over four million people improve their speaking and leadership skills since 1924.

In December 2009, Deputy CIO Liz Taylor sponsored establishment of ITCats Toastmasters Club as a career development opportunity for staff. As a charter member and officer of the start-up group, Patrick and the other members attended weekly meetings, practicing prepared speeches and impromptu speaking in a supportive and friendly environment.

“After the second speech I gave, I realized for the first time in my life that I could actually do this,” he says, “and my self-confidence got quite a bit higher.”

Recently, Patrick led two training sessions with staff from other UA departments. “Before, I would have had this tremendous sense of dread just thinking about talking in front of people. But instead, the training sessions went really well.”

Now in his second year with ITCats, Patrick continues to expand his speaking skills. Recently he competed in the ITCats club Tall Tales contest, with a drolly humorous story about a dog’s tooth. As the club winner of the contest, he then went on to represent ITCats at the next level Tall Tales Contest, against winners from other clubs.

“Toastmasters has definitely been a growth experience,” says Patrick. “I’m still nervous when talking, but it’s really helping. I never would have even attempted to enter a contest like Tall Tales before Toastmasters,” he continues.

So what’s next for Patrick? “I know that my speaking volume is something I still need to work on. Whenever I speak, I get a few feedback comments that I was too quiet. If someone else told me that, it might sting. However, I don’t feel intimidated by those comments [in the ITCats meeting]. It’s such a positive environment.”

That is why Patrick encourages people who are nervous about public speaking to attend. He also sees a place in the club for more practiced speakers. “People who are comfortable speaking should still join,” he says. “There’s always improvement that can be made, and they would really be able to help others with their feedback, taking on a mentoring role.”

ITCats Toastmasters Club welcomes guests to noon meetings, in CC 116, the 1st, 3rd, and 4th Tuesdays of the month and 5:15pm on the 2nd Tuesday. Staff at the University of Arizona who work in IT are eligible to join as members. More information is available at uits.arizona.edu/toastmasters.

How does Patrick sum up his experience with ITCats Toastmasters Club? “It’s always been fun.”

Patrick and Bridgett at the Arizona Golf Resort & Conference Center at the Toastmasters Conference in Phoenix