High Performance Computing Center Offers Enhanced Services to Researchers

The Texas Tech University High Performance Computing Center (HPCC) proudly announces the opening of a new computing facility located in the Experimental Sciences Building (ESB). Our new facility will be home to “Grendel”, our newly purchased high performance computing cluster. Grendel offers significantly more processing speed compared to its predecessor, Hrothgar. Interested researchers should contact the HPCC at (806) 742-4350.

HPCC supports research and teaching at Texas Tech University by providing resources and expertise for supercomputing, grid computing, and cyber-infrastructure. The new HPCC facility at the Experimental Sciences Building will expand the overall processing power available to Texas Tech researchers, greatly accelerating current research projects in High Energy Physics, Molecular Dynamics, Computational Chemistry, Fluid Flow Modeling, and many others who collectively generate approximately $4,000,000 in research funds each year. With on-site support staff and room for additional computing capacity, the ESB HPCC facility is poised to open up new opportunities for research and teaching. The Texas Tech High Performance Computing Center helps enable some of these research opportunities here on the South Plains, following in the vision of Texas Tech University – “From here, it’s possible”.

TechMail Upgrade Delivers Enhanced Service

After extensive testing, planning, and evaluation, the TTU IT Division implemented Microsoft Exchange 2007 for the TTU community during the summer. For those using Outlook, Exchange 2007 introduces a rich set of new features, including:

- Enhanced scheduling features in the Outlook calendar;
- Greater functionality in Outlook Web Access (http://mail.ttu.edu) accompanied by a simpler and friendlier interface for customers;
- Redesigned and improved Out-of-Office Auto-reply system; and
- Easier remote access: Outlook Anywhere – Allows you access your TechMail using Outlook 2007 off-campus…without a VPN connection!

In order to take advantage of all the new features, we recommend that you update your e-mail client to Outlook 2007. Outlook 2007, along with the full Microsoft Office 2007 suite, can be downloaded through the eRaider Account Manager (http://eraider.ttu.edu) under the “Software Download” category. As always, the software is provided free of charge to TTU faculty, staff, and students.

For those interested in additional training that highlights some of the rich new features included in Exchange and Outlook 2007, Technology Support offers shortcourses open to the University community. To review the training schedule and register for a course, please visit http://www.itts.ttu.edu/training/shortcourses. For technical assistance with Outlook 2007, please contact IT Help Central at (806) 742-HELP (4357) or ithelpcentral@ttu.edu.

IT Help Central Introduces a New Service Management System

In order to better meet the needs of the Texas Tech University community, IT Help Central upgraded our IT Service Management System during the spring and summer of 2008. Our new service and information system allows us to more quickly address customer IT needs. Some benefits that you will notice include:

- More efficient management of phone requests, including fewer initial questions and more problems resolved during the first call;
- More informative “creation” and “closing” e-mail communication when a problem is reported to IT Help Central;
- Improved response time for problems reported by e-mail;
- Enhanced self-help resources online;
- Shorter, simpler customer satisfaction surveys; and
- Faster response to campus-wide technology problems.

Our new system allows us to analyze trouble reports and service issues, so that we can proactively seek resolution. We remain dedicated to excellent service and work to continuously improve your customer experience with IT Help Central. We are also working on a comprehensive online service catalog to provide enhanced online information and resources. For more information, please contact IT Help Central at (806) 742-HELP (4357) or ithelpcentral@ttu.edu.

Message from the CIO

Welcome back to another hectic fall semester in West Texas! During the summer, the TTU IT Division has been busily testing and preparing several new or enhanced information technology services for the TTU community. In this issue, we highlight the expansion of our High Performance Computing Center cluster, enhancements to TechMail features, and our improved IT Help Desk Service Management System. In addition, Microsoft has launched a new service for students, providing free access to a richer set of products. We also spotlight our partnership with Dell and our collaboration with the Teaching, Learning, and Technology Center to upgrade WebCT, our course management system. In addition to these new services, we will be offering a host of educational opportunities and events for the TTU community. We look forward to another fall semester of collaboration and service! Go Tech!

-Sam Segran
Associate Vice President for IT and Chief Information Officer
Microsoft DreamSpark

Texas Tech University and Microsoft Corporation have completed our 2009 campus agreement that provides the tools the University community needs to conduct its educational, business, and research activities. One of the premier aspects of the new agreement is Microsoft’s DreamSpark program that makes professional-level developer and design tools available to Texas Tech students at no charge.

Students can now chase their dreams, develop their ideas, and stay abreast of multimedia technologies by accessing Microsoft’s flagship development tools for their projects and learning activities. Some of the free applications available to students are:

- Visual Studio 2008;
- Microsoft Expression Studio;
- Microsoft SQL Server 2005 Developer Edition; and
- Microsoft XNA Game Studio 2.0.

Texas Tech University has partnered with Microsoft to make it very simple for students to confirm their status as a student and obtain their software. The Texas Tech University IT Division has compiled a simple, guided walk-through process that students can access on-line at http://www.ithelpcentral.ttu.edu/solutions/dreamspark.php.

For more information on site-licensed software available through the TTU IT Division, including titles such as Microsoft Office and the Vista operating system, please visit the software information page on the Technology Support website at http://www.itts.ttu.edu/software/ or contact IT Help Central at (806) 742-HELP (4357) or ithelpcentral@ttu.edu.

Dell Partnership

The TTU IT Division has worked with Dell to develop a lineup of recommended systems for academic, business, and personal purchases. These recommended hardware bundles have been carefully designed to provide the best balance of power, price, and reliability for their areas of use. Each year as we review bundles, we update the bundles and incorporate feedback from TTU faculty, staff, and students.

You can review the recommended bundles or shop Dell’s entire catalog by visiting the IT Help Central home page at http://www.ithelpcentral.ttu.edu and clicking “Buying the Right Computer” from the left-hand navigation menu. There are recommendations for departmental purchases as well as specific recommendations for certain academic areas. Additionally, there is a link for those who want to purchase Dell products for personal use, with special pricing for the Texas Tech community.

For questions about taking advantage of this purchasing opportunity, please visit http://www.ithelpcentral.ttu.edu/recommend.php or contact IT Help Central at (806) 742-HELP (4357) or ithelpcentral@ttu.edu.

Partnership Spotlight: Course Management System Upgraded

In the last year, Blackboard acquired WebCT, so both products are now managed by a single company (BlackBoard Enterprises). The merger has caused a great deal of confusion, as the companies were previously the top two competitors in the course management software market. Texas Tech University continues to manage and support the legacy WebCT product. And, beginning this summer, we embarked on a phased migration to upgrade to the next version of WebCT. With the latest upgrade and improvement in features, the WebCT product is now called BlackBoard Campus Edition.

The Teaching, Learning, and Technology Center (TLTC), in partnership with the Texas Tech University IT Division, have begun the process of upgrading our existing WebCT product to the Campus Edition 6.2 product. Our collaborative migration from the older platform to the new version will progress over several semesters. During the summer, we piloted the new version with a group of faculty and received valuable input regarding the migration process and the new software. Our phased implementation will afford our WebCT users ample time to upgrade to the new version. In addition, the TLTC will be assisting faculty with migrating course content to the new system. Note that during the phased implementation, both versions will be maintained and operational.

Migration Team:

TLTC
- Bree Denton
- Karissa Greathouse
- Debbie Laverie, Ph.D.
- Amy Pietan

TTU IT Division
- Katherine Austin, Ph.D.
- Ric Hornsby
- Tony Rando
- Mike Simmons
- Allen Young

The TTU IT Division relies on our campus partnerships to provide services to the TTU Community. We highly value our partnership with the Teaching, Learning, and Technology Center!

Contributions by: Katherine Austin, Ph.D., Mark Holwerda, Carlaene Kelly, Yung Ng, Ric Ramon, J Stalcup, Britta Tye, and Allen Young.

Safe Computing Practices Committee: Sam Segovis, Katherine Austin, Ph.D., Darrell Bateman, Pulin Bhatt, Shannon Cepica, Scott Hall, Mark Holwerda, Michael Horton, Danny Mar, Alvin Mills, Yung Ng, Mike Simmons, J Stalcup, John Vandygriff, Allen Young, and assistance from IT Division, leadership and staff.

IT Web Site:
http://www.infotech.ttu.edu
Texas Tech University Web Site:
http://www.ttu.edu
Computer-Based Training (CBT):
http://cbt.ttu.edu
Laws and Texas Tech Policies:
http://www.itts.ttu.edu/documentation/laws

Past copies of TTU IT Division Bulletins may be found online at http://www.infotech.ttu.edu/itbulletin
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