OIT initiates new campus telecommunications service

Michael Hagearty
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The Office of Information Technology has taken the first step in the deployment of a new telephone system for the entire campus. A five-year contract with BellSouth signed last month is expected to simplify telecommunications at Tech, while improving the range of available services and delivering a lower cost to campus units.

At a project meeting in January, Chief Information Officer John Mullin was enthusiastic about the increased flexibility a new system will provide. "This is a major milestone, as we have made attempts over multiple years to modernize the telephone system at Georgia Tech," he said. "We've struggled for years with a service that was less than it could be. Now, we're going to take control of our own destiny."

The cutover, which will start this summer and take place in several phases, requires substantial hardware upgrades, and in some cases, modernization of building telecommunications closets and wiring to serve the 12,000 lines currently in use on the main campus. In preparation, OIT will coordinate with private contractors to begin the installation of core networking equipment and other infrastructure improvements over the course of the next several months.

The decision to replace Tech's existing system stems from the recommendation of a task force commissioned by Gov. Sonny Perdue in 2003. As a result of the study, the chancellor of the Board of Regents enabled universities to pursue cost-effective solutions to meet their telecommunications needs. The current system, provided by the Georgia Technology Authority, has been in place for nine years.

The new system will be located on campus and owned and managed by Georgia Tech. Mullin said the changeover would yield "significant" savings over the next five to 10 years. More importantly, he said, Georgia Tech's telephone service, which competes with BellSouth, will provide a "better" level of customer service.

"We knew from the feedback that we received right away that our project was among the best in the competition. Everyone understood the story we were trying to tell, and that was a key indication that they understood the overall concept of the project," said Dagenhart, who oversaw the team.

The Georgia Tech team — graduate students Shauna Achey, C. Scott D'Agostino, Chad Stacy and Jeffrey Williams — presented their proposal during winter break and last week in Dubai. The proposal included suggestions on broad principles, design strategies and specific courses of action for next steps.

"The Georgia Tech project told a story," said Professor Richard Dagenhart, who oversaw the team. "We knew from the feedback that we received right away that our project was among the best in the competition. Everyone understood the story we were trying to tell, and that was a key indication that they understood the overall concept of the project."

The Georgia Tech team created its proposal during winter break and worked on the project during the first few weeks of spring semester. The team's first step was to study the traditional Islamic city and traditional house forms and learn from them. The proposals then combined tradition with contemporary design for new housing, public spaces, and the tradition of Dubai's wind towers designed to be public art.

"We think our students had a unique opportunity to see how architecture reveals a different cultural tradition in the Middle East," said Dagenhart. "At
Nunn Policy Forum focuses on global digital divide

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Institute Communications and Public Affairs

To tackle the complex topic of the global digital divide, the 2006 Sam Nunn Policy Forum featured speakers with expertise ranging from economics, gender issues, information technology, international affairs, international development, public policy and telecommunications.

In his opening remarks, Senator Sam Nunn said, "technology is changing our world — offering both promise and peril. How do we ensure that technology narrows the divide between rich and poor? The gaps are increasingly difficult to explain."

Throughout the Forum, speakers described efforts to bring wired and wireless telephone and Internet access to rural areas in developing countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China and Rwanda.

During the morning keynote, Charles Kenny, senior economist at the World Bank, said that since 2002 in Afghanistan, massive investment in telecommunications has resulted in mobile phone coverage growing from zero to 50 percent coverage today. He also noted the increasingly rapid adoption of new technologies around the world, comparing the landline telephone (110 years) to reach 10 percent of the world's population in the television (50 years), the mobile phone (20 years) and the Internet (10 years). Kenny concluded that information and communication technologies (ICTs) are only part of the international development story, and that proponents need to be realistic about ICTs' potential to drive economic growth.

Ernest Wilson, a professor of politics at the University of Maryland, added, "Access is a critical issue. Many now have physical access but need financial access. Do they have cognitive access? Do they know how to use it? Is there any content that's relevant or interesting?" Wilson noted the continuing relevance of C.P. Snow’s essays, arguing that policymakers and scientists need to work together.

Silas Lwakabamba, founding director of Njali University of Science, Technology and Management in Rwanda outlined the efforts and challenges of moving Rwanda from an agricultural economy to a knowledge-based economy. For example, an international project laying fiber optic cable from Durban, South Africa, to Djibouti in northeast Africa is 10 times more expensive per mile than in the United States.

Ambassador David Gross, U.S. Coordinator for International Communications and Information Policy of U.S. Department of State gave the keynote address entitled, "America's Economic Future in an Age of Global ICT Networks." Gross noted there are now more than 1 billion Internet subscribers in the world, and in addition there are 122 democracies today compared to 30 during the Cold War.

"The ability for people to see for themselves what's going on around the world, the ability for them to break through geographic barriers has been significant and contributed to the growth of democracies," says Gross. "It is by technology that we can understand each other better."

2006 Graduate rankings

College of Computing

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<th>Discipline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computer science</td>
<td>1st</td>
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<td>Theory</td>
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College of Sciences

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<th>Discipline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>24th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discrete/Combinations</td>
<td>7th</td>
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<td>Physics</td>
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Outgrowth of recruiting and retaining the finest faculty and students possible and investing in the infrastructure that allows them to thrive," said Clough.

Among business schools, Tech's College of Management ranked 34th, down two from the previous year when it vaulted up 10 slots.

"I’m very proud of our faculty, graduate students and staff," said Clough. "We’re competing against some of the finest universities in the world and excelling."
Plenty of opportunities for recycling at Earth Day

People wanting to discard their old computers and people with overcrowded, unused office supply storage areas will be interested in two new programs at this year’s Georgia Tech Earth Day.

The Office of Solid Waste Management & Recycling, which organizes the annual event, is introducing the Office Supply Exchange and electronic waste recycling at the Earth Day celebration, planned for April 21 along Skiles Walkway.

Office supply exchange

The purpose of the Office Supply Exchange is to move unwanted supplies office not using it to another office that will.

In preparation for the Earth Day event, unwanted office supplies are being solicited on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. at the Office of Solid Waste Management & Recycling on Atlantic Drive.

During Earth Day, visitors showing their BuzzCard are free to keep useful items at no charge.

This office supply exchange is a form of recycling, and it’s open to all Techology staff, faculty and students,” Jackson said. “Because every segment of the campus community participates, everyone can enjoy the free ‘shopping’ too.

Dagenhart also suggested that the biggest impact on the students might be the collaborative work itself.

“It really was a unique learning opportunity.”

Dagenhart said, “The students were able to work collaboratively with their professor, which is much different from or normal group or individual studio work. I set the direction and they did the work. If something didn’t work, then they had to figure out something else.”

The winning team received a cash prize, part of which will be split among the students with the rest going to the College of Architecture to promote urban design and research, including recruitment of students to the program. Italy’s Pavia University placed second.

IN BRIEF:

New Library Resource Center offers suite of services

The Office of Information Technology (OIT) has built a suite for student services called the Resource Center to renovate space on the ground floor of the Library West. Beginning this week, the Resource Center is the new home of OIT’s walk-in support functions, the Success Program’s evening hours for 1-to-1 Tutoring, the Undergraduate Academic Advising office’s new advisement program and a conference room that doubles as the Library’s second presentation-rehearsal studio.

The Resource Center project started with an initiative endorsed by students and Georgia Tech administration. Initially a partnership between the Library and OIT, the project grew to include the Office of Success Programs and undergraduate academic advising.

The Center will provide a one-stop shop for services that were formerly scattered across the campus. It will also serve as a test bed for future projects aimed at centralizing student services.

“The Resource Center is a prototype for the proposed undergraduate learning center,” said Crit Stuart, the Library’s associate director for Public Services. “We’re learning what it takes to attract students and manage co-located services in a dynamic partnership.”

For more information about the Resource Center, or to reach someone in the Center by phone, call 894-7173.

Participants sought for survey on ethics

The Focused Research Program in Ethics and Technology is conducting an ethics survey. The purpose of the research is to identify the most important ethical issues that arise in the various kinds of research and teaching that take place across the Georgia Tech campus, and to assess the need for training resources to help faculty, staff, and students address those issues. The results of the survey will inform decisions regarding the resources and services a proposed Center for Ethics and Technology at Georgia Tech would provide.

The survey, accessible until Apr. 15 at www.bme.gatech.edu/ethics, is open to all faculty, academic professionals, researchers, post-docs and graduate and undergraduate students at Georgia Tech.

The survey takes approximately 10 minutes to complete and is voluntary. Participants may skip any question they do not wish to answer or withdraw at any time without penalty. All responses will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law.

Call for submissions

Georgia Tech is hosting the 30th bi-annual Pan American Convention of Engineers/Union Pan Americana de Asociaciones de Ingenieria (UPADI), Sept. 19-22, 2006. This is the first time the conference has been hosted in Georgia and by Georgia Tech.

The theme of the bilingual conference is “Building a Sustainable Infrastructure: Education, Technology Innovation, and Economic Development.” UPADI is calling for final paper submissions by the June 2006 deadline, as well as inviting students to enter UPADI’s Student Design Paper Competition. Submission guidelines can be found at www.upadi2006.com.