Introduction

Information Technology (IT) experienced a transformational fiscal year through new initiatives, employee loss, service model changes, and changes in leadership. IT and the GC campus experienced the deaths of two long-time employees and a new member of IT within a 5-month period. The loss of our friends and team members was devastating to IT and throughout the campus. We are grateful for the compassion we received from our campus. The IT staff was able to navigate each change while maintaining services and our commitment to our customers. We take great pride in knowing we honored our colleagues by pulling together to continue our service commitments. Services changes included moving one of our main applications, Banner, from an on-premise environment to the University System of Georgia’s hosted environment and the deployment of Ask Thunder, our Artificial Intelligence Chatbot.

In January, our Chief Information Officer (CIO), Robert Orr, submitted his retirement for the end of May. Dr. Orr served his remaining time working on critical IT assignments as the IT Special Assistant to the Provost, and Dr. Brown appointed Charlie Weaver to serve as Interim CIO. The Interim CIO’s transition was relatively smooth given his previous role at GC as the Director of Network and VoIP Services in IT. The IT staff weathered another significant change while maintaining our commitment and services. As we prepared for the end of the Spring Semester, we learned our Provost, Dr. Brown, would be leaving GC.

Dr. Brown’s leaving, and the appointment of the Interim Provost, and the Interim CIO were critical changes that impacted IT, although IT’s mission and dedication to service and customer satisfaction did not change. With the interim status of two key leaders, several non-critical open positions have been put on hold, causing a service issue in some cases. The CIO search is underway and expected to be completed in August and the Provost search will be completed in September or October. With both of these positions filled, IT can continue to mature and create long term strategic goals.

IT continues improving and maturing into a campus collaborative partner and customer service-oriented organization. We are proud of our ability to adapt and adjust to the rapidly changing higher education landscape and necessary disruptive technologies. We are committed to constantly reviewing opportunities to provide the best services at the best value to ensure our users have the technology to succeed. In the coming year, we will focus securing our data through technology, processes, procedures, governance, and education. Continuing the use of technologies such as multifactor authentication, single sign on, and intrusion detection will help secure our campus and users. As part of the security focus, we will provide user education to protect our data, our campus, the USG and our users. We will continue to provide the services and technology solutions necessary to attain and retain the preeminent status that is, GC.

The following provides a summary of initiatives from our IT Strategic Plan and the top IT accomplishments related to the goal.

Goal 1: Recruit, admit, enroll, retain, and graduate highly qualified and diverse undergraduate students.

- Improved GC Mobile app and Banner Student Information System interfaces
- Developed and deployed an Artificial Intelligence Chat Bot, Ask Thunder, to provide services our users want on-demand and provide responses. Ask Thunder is available on all gcsu.edu web pages.
- Worked with the Provost and AVP for Enrollment Management to engage Admit Hub as a recruitment tool and enterprise wide Artificial Intelligence Chat Bot replacement.
Implemented multi-factor authentication for faculty/staff email and Banner Managed Services
Serves on the EAB Leadership Team to improve and expand services for the campus.

Goal 2: Develop and implement distinctive and transformative undergraduate curricular and co-curricular experiences. Transformative experiences include but are not limited to: undergraduate research; creative projects; study abroad; service-learning; community-based learning; leadership development; diversity and global learning; field and clinical-based practica, apprenticeships, preceptorships, and internships.

Developed the infrastructure for the Nursing Simulation Lab at Navicent.
Technology Support Services (TSS) upgraded all of the campus computer classrooms to Windows 10.
Collaborated with the Center for Teaching and Learning, Facilities Planning and faculty to design and implement a highly successful active learning classroom in Arts and Sciences Room 338.
Web access of lab software via Thundercloud continues to receive positive feedback from students and faculty.
Thundercloud will replace physical computers in Windows computer labs which will reduce replacement costs, increase reliability, and provide faculty with customized environments to support their pedagogical needs.
TSS provided multiple training sessions on classroom equipment and WebEx.
IT continues to serve on the University Strategic Plan Committee.
Network Services implemented redundant access to our West Campus location.
The external wireless network has been improved with the addition of several outdoor access points.
Enterprise Applications assisted in the implementation and integrations for numerous student-related services in advising, career services, payment, parking, schedule planning, medical records, student rating system, transcripts, and event scheduling.

Goal 3: Offer a limited number of exceptional quality graduate programs that are highly relevant to workforce demand and supportive of the university mission.

Supported enhancements to Hobsons.

Goal 4: Align resources through generation, redirection, prioritization, cost containment, and stewardship to address strategic priorities.

GC Signatures continues to help the campus move from a paper process to an automated, trackable process. The electronic workflow provides users and approvers with a streamlined, timely, and paperless process. There are seventy-six processes available in GC Signatures.
IT administers the annual EDUCAUSE Technology Research in the Academic Community (ETRAC) survey for student and faculty. These surveys provide data directly from our users to help inform technology services.
Developed and deployed an Artificial Intelligence Chatbot, Ask Thunder, to provide services our users want on-demand, reducing emails and phone calls enhancing student satisfaction.
IT worked with Facilities Operations on our data center power infrastructure to help mitigate future power issues, which could have resulted in the loss of the data center services.
Expansion of network services on the exterior areas of the Centennial Center improved wireless coverage and internet access. The tennis court enhancement provided the ability to stream matches; the Centennial Center Bus Stop provided bus route and messaging services.
VoIP phone services for the faculty, staff, and fax machines are self-supporting. IT has been able to maintain the same cost model for the campus departments.
• The implementation of a new web development tool decreases implementation time of forms and enhances form creation.
• Identity management single sign-on authentications added to numerous campus systems.
• Review and maintained our active Incident Response Information.
• Maintained our back-up services at the University of West Georgia.
• Annual department security plans were completed by 94% of the campus.
• Security awareness trainings provided to the campus.
• Active phishing campaigns were used to educate users and heighten awareness.

Goal 5: Enhance a professional environment that encourages the recruitment, retention, and success of an exemplary and diverse faculty and staff.

• The University of West Georgia’s followed GC’s lead and hosted the second USG Women in Technology event in July 2018.
• The Director of Operations presented an update on the USG Women in IT to the USG CIO Advisory Council. The presentation secured three additional years of commitment: Georgia Tech 2019, Albany State University 2020 and University of North Georgia 2021.
• Members of the IT staff participated in external staff development training to enhance their skills and knowledge.

Goal 6: Strengthen community and regional ties through service, research, programs, and partnerships that enhance economic, educational, and cultural opportunities to improve the quality of life for citizens of Milledgeville/Baldwin County and the middle Georgia region.

• Enhanced services to the Andalusia Site with the addition of wired and wireless network, high speed internet access, and the addition of campus wide services such as VoIP and network login.
• Discussions on potential opportunities to assist in a partnership or assistance in providing enhanced connectivity to rural areas.

Conclusion

IT continues to be a strategic partner and enabler for the campus in achieving our collective vision to become a nationally, recognized, preeminent public liberal arts institution. We are proud we’ve been able to improve and maintain services with a conscious effort on fiscal and environmental responsibility. Our hope is the accomplishments listed reflect our commitment to service and Georgia College. IT looks forward to opportunities to develop and strengthen our relationship with the campus. We look forward to assisting and serving our administration, faculty, staff, and students as we work collaboratively in achieving preeminence.