

## REPORT TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES INFORMATION SERVICES

October 2003–January 2004

I am pleased to provide you with Wheaton College's first combined trustees' report from Academic Computing, Information Technology & Services (IT&S), and the Library.

### ***Integrating Information Units***

Employees from our three units conducted a *stakeholder needs/wishes analysis* between February and May 2003. That analysis gathered feedback from members of Wheaton's community about impressions of the current state of services, resources, facilities, and infrastructure.

The needs analysis is one component of an overall process that the three "sister information units" are undertaking to improve the way information services are delivered at Wheaton. In all, roughly 330 members of the community representing faculty, staff, and students participated in the analysis, contributing thousands of comments. Following a thorough and lengthy process of reviewing and categorizing these comments, several general themes and numerous sub-themes emerged.

This past summer, employees from the sister units drafted an "organizational vision" consonant with what we learned in the stakeholder analysis. During fall term 2003, our library and technology staff identified the most significant impediments, barriers, or gaps that could impede us from achieving this vision if not addressed. For the remainder of FY04, our staffs will be recommending solutions to overcome these hurdles as well as formulating implementation plans to put these solutions into practice.

The primary objective of this work is to initiate a process of change—that may take several years to accomplish—for achieving far-reaching integration of information services and technologies at Wheaton. One step toward closer collaboration is our joint effort in producing a single information services newsletter for the Wheaton community. This publication, *Kaleidoscope*, appears in both print and electronic format and offers a convenient way to keep informed about our activities: <<http://www.wheatoncollege.edu/kaleido/>>. Such joint publications are still rare in higher education and we are delighted to pioneer this effort.

### ***Educational Uses of Technology***

Faculty use of Blackboard, the College's course management software (CMS) product grew to over 120 courses during fall 2003. In addition to supporting traditional course work, Blackboard functionality is becoming popular elsewhere on campus. Although not specifically designed to do so, Blackboard has been adopted by a number of campus committees, work groups, student organizations, and administrative departments to share information and support collaborative effort.

To support Wheaton's global initiatives, we upgraded two satellite receivers and began displaying foreign broadcast tapes in the "Global News Corner" of Meneely Hall.

Wheaton was awarded a \$35,000 grant from the National Institute for Technology in Liberal Education (NITLE) Center for Educational Technology at Middlebury, Vermont entitled: *Examining Scholarly and Pedagogical Implications of the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) for Small Liberal Arts Colleges*. This project is a joint effort with Mt. Holyoke College.

### ***Planning for Learning Spaces***

In October 2003, Wheaton representatives participated in the first ever PKAL/NITLE *new learning spaces* workshop at DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana. This workshop guided teams from about a dozen national liberal arts colleges in considering how to effectively design physical spaces on campus that accommodate information technologies in ways that serve their particular institutional goals for student learning, both curricular and co-curricular. Some of the issues addressed at the workshop included:

- setting *goals* for student learning and translating them into *spaces* for student learning—how to link curricular and/or program planning to planning for physical spaces
- ensuring that new spaces accommodate effective pedagogies and technologies most creatively
- renovating spaces to serve identified goals within libraries, campus centers, classrooms, etc., especially older, existing spaces not designed with a vision of a collaborative community in mind
- how pedagogy, learning environments, and technologies might evolve, and how to prepare for and capture that future in the design of programs and spaces

### ***Viruses and SPAM***

In late August and early September 2003, most U.S. colleges and universities were plagued with a “perfect storm” of computer viruses and security attacks. The impact of these unwanted intrusions was a nuisance at those institutions that were relatively well prepared for such occurrences. However, at those colleges and universities where technology infrastructure was less well managed, outright network collapse brought both academic and institutional business work to a complete standstill for hours, days, or even weeks. We are happy to report that Wheaton was in the former group. Still, our technology staff had to devote hundreds of hours helping nearly 1,200 virus victims to clean their computers—time they would have preferred spending on more productive tasks.

As you undoubtedly know, *spamming* is the practice of flooding the Internet with many copies of the same message, in an attempt to force the message on people who would not otherwise choose to receive it. Most spam is commercial advertising, often for dubious products, get-rich-quick schemes, or quasi-legal services. At current rates, informed experts predict that spam will comprise more than half of all email messages traveling on the Internet within a year or two. Wheaton has taken several steps in recent months to reduce the amount of spam messages traveling on our network, not only because our community finds it annoying, but also because it risks clogging our campus email system, potentially causing it to fail. In taking these actions, we strive to achieve a balance between censorship and responsible management of the College’s network resources.

We are grateful the Dean of Students division has helped our technology staff spread the word about how students can take a more active role in protecting their computers from virus infections and themselves from unwanted email. We offered virus clinics and operating system updates for students, faculty, and staff, and a special start-of-school issue of *Kaleidoscope* was devoted to music file sharing, viruses, and other security concerns.

### ***Technology Productivity and Cost-Avoidance Improvements***

We have introduced a single electronic ID for all community members as the first step of a *one-ID-one-password* authentication scheme that eventually will relieve our community from having to use a plethora of usernames and passwords to access and employ the College’s growing number of electronic tools and resources.

Our technology staff is nearing completion of a year-long project to implement a new web-based reporting tool for creating management reports from the data maintained in Banner, the College's Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system. Although costly, this new interface will permit faculty and staff to get administrative data they need more conveniently, effectively, and efficiently.

### ***Campus Network Upgrades***

Wheaton's capacity for conveying digital data effectively, reliably, and securely among all members of the College community is mission critical. For the past two years, we have been progressively upgrading our network capability in a three-phase process. Most recently we upgraded networks in all residence halls. Before fall term 2004, all three phases will be completed. When finished, our new data network will provide for ongoing, scalable growth to meet anticipated demand for another decade. Our new network infrastructure places Wheaton at the head of most U.S. liberal arts colleges in this capability.

The College successfully migrated to a new Internet service provider based in Rhode Island. Service from this consortium, known as OSHEAN, Inc. (Ocean State Higher Education Economic Development and Administration Network), doubles our previous Internet capacity and gains us access to *Internet2* (or I2) at no overall cost increase to the College. Wheaton now joins only a handful of U.S. liberal arts colleges with I2 access. I2 is a collaborative endeavor of over 200 universities teaming with industry and government worldwide to develop advanced technology and applications for academic experimentation and research.

Monthly per minute telephone charges dropped and a new caller ID service was added when the College switched local telephone providers this past fall.

### ***Library Intersection with Learning and Teaching***

Each year during the month of January, Wheaton librarians and academic computing staff offer a series of faculty development workshops. This year, one of these workshops hosted by the library was entitled, *Designing Library Assignments That Make Your Students Think: From First-Year Seminar to Senior Seminar*. The workshop was structured around the impressions of five faculty members who shared their experiences of using library resources and services to create more affective course assignments. Topics such as assignment design, information competency skill development, and "Google dependencies" were examined and debated. The workshop also generated energy around the topic of what evolution in critical thinking skills faculty desire of Wheaton students—both linked to and independent of a particular discipline or major—as they progress through their undergraduate education.

### ***Library Space***

A library *Master Planning Team* is examining current and potential use of all spaces in our building. This team is utilizing various objective measures and comparative data—taking into account our new "blended" organization—and identifying ways to draw the entire campus community into the process. The primary objective is to use these spaces as productively as possible for learning and teaching at Wheaton.

A draft report from the library's *Collection Space Task Force* is completed. This report assesses our current collection space conditions and projects the library's collection space needs over the next twenty years. At the current rate of growth, method of shelving, and space constraints, the library will exhaust all shelf space for books it owns within two years. Short of expanding the current facility, the report identifies several scenarios to address our limited space for books—including a rigorous weeding program, reducing the rate of library acquisitions, transferring most

of the circulating collection into compact shelving, or remotely storing portions of the collection off campus. Wheaton will select and act on one of these options—or a combination of them—during FY 05 to meet both short-term space needs as well as projected needs over the next twenty years.

### ***Replacing Integrated Library System***

The library's integrated library system (ILS) is somewhat analogous to the Banner ERP system. Its functionality supports core library process: acquisitions, cataloging, serials management, and circulation—to name a few—and, of course, the online catalog dubbed "ELIZA". We have used this product for over ten years and it has reached the end of its useful life. The library intends to acquire a newer version of this product, either by direct purchase or by joining the Rhode Island Higher Education Library Information Network (HELIN)

<http://www.ric.edu/library/helin.html>. HELIN member libraries share an ILS. The consortium's cost structure may offer long-term pricing advantages for maintaining and upgrading this technology essential for Wheaton's library.

### ***Statistical Tidbits***

- Over 97 percent of students enrolled at Wheaton own a personal computer that they bring to campus. Some bring *two* computers to campus—a desktop for use in their residence and a laptop to use in the classroom, library, dining hall, or other convenient space.
- Over the past six years, the number of electronic journals, magazines, and newspapers offered by the Madeleine Clark Wallace Library to Wheaton students and faculty has increased from 112 to nearly 4,300!
- The College has deployed 300 public computers across campus for student use—in the library and various other locations, such as the Kollett Academic Computing Center and specialty labs. This is more than double the number available five years ago.
- In a typical week, the College traps from 16,000-20,000 SPAM email messages that otherwise would have clogged the email boxes of Wheaton students, faculty, and staff.
- During a typical academic day, Wheaton's web site is "visited" about 85,000 times, or about 2.5 million visits per month. What information are these users clamoring for? The most popular content destinations on our web site have held relatively steady for the past few years (in rank order): *athletics, academics, admission, information technology, and library.*

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