New centers, new focus boost technology plan

With a new team identified to help faculty develop on-line courses, the University of West Florida is about to begin a new chapter in providing educational opportunities worldwide.

Dr. Pam Northrup will be the director of the Academic Technology Center (ATC), which will support faculty in designing and delivering distance learning programs.

Joining her in the new center are Karen Barth, Vance Burgess and John Crane. Besides developing courses, that team will provide professional development for faculty and support for interactive distance learning, the Desire to Learn system and the online campus portal project.

Also, the Center for University Teaching and Learning (CUTL), under the direction of Dr. Gary Howard, has been refocused to provide pedagogical support for faculty in developing and teaching on-line courses.

Both centers report directly to the provost.

That and other technology announcements were made during a town hall meeting on Wednesday to highlight the progress on implementing Phase I of the IT Strategic Plan, the first at UWF.

“I want to thank everyone who has been involved in this process for creating centers that will enhance our faculty’s ability to develop on-line courses,” Cavanaugh said. “In just a few short months, we have identified the specific mission and responsibilities of the new centers and the people who will provide the technological support to our faculty. This is an important step as we march forward with our plan to improve technology at all levels of the university.”

This is just the first of the three-phase plan, designed to enhance faculty support and reorganize central IT units. Phase II, scheduled for deployment next spring, will focus on reorganizing server and desktop support. Phase III, scheduled for deployment in fall 2004, will focus on reorganizing computer lab support and building an e-business support organization.

ATC will develop a model for creating on-line courses, and it has identified three degree programs as first priorities: Masters in Human Performance Technology in the College of Professional Studies, Maritime Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences and a graduate business core in the College of Business.

“I cannot imagine anything more beneficial to our faculty developing online courses than ATC and CUTL,” Little said. “Faculty will have easy access to talented professionals in developing quality products that will reach a broad market.”
While ATC and CUTL are integral components of the IT initiative, there is much more.

Melanie Haveard has been promoted to the new position of chief technology officer (CTO), the number two position in ITS, with primary responsibility for UWF’s core information technology architecture. As CTO, Haveard will oversee all major IT infrastructure design and development projects at UWF, leading projects such as the new web services portal. She will report directly to Chief Information Officer Mike Dieckmann.

There also are other changes within Information Technology Services (ITS):

- Reorganization of the ITS Support Center. ITS is creating a new Academic Infrastructure Services team, focusing on the support of classroom technology, computer labs, and faculty computing. The new team will be managed by Michael White, formerly ITS computer labs manager. It will include two new positions for classroom technology support and a redefined position focused solely on support of the interactive distance learning studio classrooms.

- The merger of the ITS Help Desk and desktop computing support units to form a single team, managed by Regina Davis, ITS Help Desk Manager. The expanded help desk team will reorganize to provide help desk services 24 hours a day in spring 2003. Brett Gerdeman is being promoted to technology specialist, focusing on desktop computing technologies.

- Web services consolidation. Marketing Communications and ITS have formed a cross-departmental team to provide integrated web information services for UWF. Marketing Communications manages content and style issues while ITS provides the infrastructure and technical support services. The new web services team is working on a variety of projects, including installation of a university-wide web services portal, upgrading the web-based university events calendar and implementing a web-based ticket sales system in cooperation with Student Affairs.

- Development of an elearning.uwf.edu website, upgrades of university bandwidth through Lambda Rail and enhanced videostreaming and data storage services.

- Finally, as announced earlier, the Telecommunications Services group merged with ITS and physically relocated to Building 79 on Nov. 1. As part of the Networking and Telecommunications workgroup of ITS, the telecommunications operation will merge with data networking services to provide an integrated service unit for all networking needs at UWF.
Additional information on the implementation of the IT Strategic Plan can be found at http://ithotline.uwf.edu. That site is updated regularly to show the latest developments.