Penn State

Updates from the Vice Provost for IT

December 17, 2015

Starfish advising platform project kicks off: To help meet the University's advising and early progress reporting needs, the Division of Undergraduate Studies and Administrative Information Services Project Management Office have kicked off a project to implement the Starfish Enterprise Success Platform. The project will help deliver quality academic advising at scale to advance student learning and degree completion across the University. The Starfish platform will replace the advising piece of eLion and other college-hosted advising systems and will interface with the LionPATH student information and Canvas learning management systems. With more than twenty technical specialists representing fifteen partner offices, the Starfish team will work to deliver the tool to more than 3,000 students, faculty, and staff beginning in May 2016.

2016 TLT Symposium to showcase innovative technologies for teaching and learning: Registration for the Penn State Symposium for Teaching and Learning with Technology (TLT) is now open. Drawing about 500 attendees each year, the TLT Symposium is an annual showcase of the innovative ways faculty and staff from across Penn State's campus locations leverage technology to enrich student learning. This year's event will explore active learning; learning spaces; accessible and open educational resources; the Canvas learning management system; and emerging technologies, designs, and processes. The event will take place March 19 at The Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel. For more information, visit symposium.tlt.psu.edu.

Open Innovation Challenge call for submissions now open: The call for submissions is now open for the second annual Open Innovation Challenge held in conjunction with the 2016 TLT Symposium. This speaking opportunity is a chance for Penn State faculty to present imaginative ideas that enhance teaching and learning in higher education. The best ideas will be showcased in a set of fast-paced presentations and the winning idea will be nurtured by a team of experts to further develop the concept. Last year's winner, Ann Clements, associate professor of music education, has been working with TLT staff on a 3-D virtual reality teaching lab. For more information, visit challenge.tlt.psu.edu.

TLT presents e-learning series for Penn State faculty: This semester, a TLT e-learning workshop series is helping faculty address the opportunities and challenges that come with teaching degree programs shared between two or more Penn State campuses. The workshops are being delivered face-to-face at five Penn State campuses that share degree programs, but faculty can also participate online via Adobe Connect. The most recent workshop in October featured instructional designers from Penn State and the University of Nebraska–Lincoln who discussed their real-world experiences and tactics for facilitating student collaboration.

Penn State research network showcased at symposium in China: Earlier this semester, staff members from Telecommunications and Networking Services attended the Chinese-American Networking Symposium (CANS) in Chengdu, China to present on the University's deployment of a high-speed research network called Science DMZ. Penn State built Science DMZ—which is optimized for high-performance scientific applications—to address the high-bandwidth needs of University researchers who work with large data sets and to provide new models of computer network architecture. Each year, CANS provides opportunities for Internet2 members and Chinese universities and researchers to share information, collaborate on services, and build relationships. The trip was funded almost entirely by CANS and Internet2.

Penn State New Kensington instructors transition to a blended teaching approach: As part of the Penn State New Kensington Blended Initiative, four faculty members—Rick Harnish, Jyotsna Kalavar, Jeff Roth, and Hal Smith— are working with instructional designers from TLT to redesign courses into a blended face-to-face and online format. Blended learning enables students to learn, in part, through the delivery of instruction and content via online and digital media. For example, such activities as watching videos will take place outside of class to free up time for valuable in-class discussions and activities.

Penn State Brandywine students contribute to international science wiki: This semester, an Earth 100 (GN) Environmental Earth course taught by Laura Guertin, a professor of earth sciences at Penn State Brandywine and a former TLT Faculty Fellow, will be the first undergraduate University course to generate pages for the Society of Exploration Geophysicists wiki at http://wiki.seg.org/wiki/Main_Page. Given the need for more reliable geoscience content on the web, the students will get the chance to learn more about a particular earth science topic in which they are interested and share their knowledge with the world. The project is an extension of the work Guertin did to enhance teaching and learning with technology as a TLT Faculty Fellow, a program that invites Penn State faculty to work with TLT instructional designers on innovative technology projects.

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