EXCELLENCE

Thursby Honored as IT Champion

Randall Thursby, chief information officer of the North Dakota University System, received the Information Technology Council of North Dakota’s (ITCND) North Dakota IT Champion award during the 13th annual IT Awards Program on May 1 in Fargo. Thursby was recognized for his continued commitment to North Dakota’s students and IT industry.

Thursby has provided bold leadership in the development and delivery of a strategic vision built on an integrated approach to technology innovation. His vision for the North Dakota University System has included collaboration with key constituent groups and the private sector. Through these partnerships, he has forged a common IT vision that leveraged resources by sharing services and maximizing IT investments while increasing overall efficiencies.

Thursby’s leadership has influenced a broad spectrum of organizations, resulting in positive impact on students, faculty, staff and North Dakota’s citizens as technology continues to impact their lives. He has sought to reduce student costs and increase worker productivity.

“Thursby’s dedication to North Dakota’s students and his contributions to IT in the academic realm are outstanding,” says Gary Inman, ITCND president. “He is truly a champion of North Dakota information technology.”

ITCND is the leading IT advocacy organization in the state. It was founded by North Dakota business, government and education leaders to encourage the use, growth and development of information technology in North Dakota.

ACCESS

Lake Region State College Students Now on Office 365

Lake Region State College successfully upgraded all student email accounts from Live@edu to Office 365 recently. The change took place over a weekend with little disruption in service. Within three hours, all LRSC accounts moved from the old Live@edu system to the new student version of Office 365.

In addition to email, Office 365 provides instant messaging, group video and voice chat through Lync, and online document viewing and editing. The new service also provides a personal account that includes SkyDrive and Skype.

Other NDUS campuses are scheduled to make the move in the coming weeks. Then in the fall, the student system will be merged with the staff/faculty system to allow for maximum collaboration and coordination amongst all Office 365 users.

Toofawn Simhai, LRSC CIO, reported that “From my point of view, upgrading the student email system to 365 has been well received on campus. The ITS department had less than a dozen students needing help configuring their devices. Students are accustomed to changing technology and this was an easy change to make.”
INNOVATION

NDUS Tegrity Use Recognized

Tegrity bestowed its annual Shared Vision award on NDUS in April at its Customer Appreciation Awards Ceremony in Boston.

Tim Peyton, Senior Director of Marketing for Tegrity, highlighted the University System’s effort in rolling out lecture capture technology as part of the Maximizing Results through Efficiencies effort last year.

“Tegrity was rolled out to two research institutions, four regional universities, five community colleges, and three different learning management systems during the summer of 2012, positively impacting over 39,000 students statewide,” Peyton said.

All 11 NDUS institutions are using Tegrity to support face-to-face, blended, and online courses. Specific uses range from lecture recordings for later playback to student assignments and lab review. Tegrity is also useful as a tutoring aid, while some instructors are using Tegrity to flip their classroom.

Tegrity has shown steady growth since it was launched in July. Since then, more than 18,000 recordings have been created while users have logged more than 135,000 viewing hours.

Jerry Rostad, Director of User Services for SITS, says the adoption of Tegrity continues to expand. “There was a high demand for lecture capture technologies prior to the implementation of Tegrity and we anticipate continued growth as faculty find more and more ways to incorporate lecture capture technologies in their classroom.”

CAMPUS CORNER

Minot State’s Online Integrated Classroom

The College of Business at Minot State University is piloting an online student integrated classroom. This project has both online and on-campus students attending the same class at the same time.

Students in either environment can see and hear the professor live, view the interactive whiteboard, engage in conversations, and participate in small groups. Classes are also recorded for replay or for students who were unable to attend.

“Usually online classes are delivered in text form,” said Gary Ross, business administration department chair. “But the integrated classroom setting allows online students to participate actively in a live class and demonstrably enhances their online learning experience.”

Students can access classes from anywhere in the world with only a computer, a web cam, and an Internet connection. This project makes it possible for students, or even instructors, to participate remotely.

Originally developed at San Francisco State University, it is believed that only a handful of universities in the U.S. currently offer courses this way. Minot State University has nine classes in the pilot project.

“It is not uncommon to see technology like this used in corporate boardrooms,” said Mark Timbrook from the Office of Instructional Technology. “But those systems can cost $250,000 to $300,000. We were able to create ours for under $3,000.”

Ross is quick to point out that while the cost savings are nice, the resulting efficiency and flexibility provide the real benefits.

Training Tidbit

Shared Drive vs. SharePoint

When you want to share access to files with others, there are two choices that sometimes get confused: shared drives and SharePoint. Shared drives have been available for years while SharePoint is a newer service from Microsoft. Both options provide individuals and teams a place for folders and files stored “in the cloud” (a.k.a. not on your computer).

While both offer some level of restricted access, SharePoint access can be much more precise than shared drives. Permission can be given, or denied, at the hierarchy, folder, or individual file level. It also adds versioning control, ownership, and the ability to lock files from changes. Plus, you can search inside SharePoint files, not just folders and filenames. In summary, while shared drives and SharePoint can both provide shared access to files, the similarity stops there. Sharepoint’s extensive capabilities make it a much more robust solution in managing files that are shared among users.