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# Information Technology Services Fosters Independence, Inclusion

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***Ongoing Series ...***

▷ ***Shining Gems of IWU:*** **Assets and Assistance Within Reach**

Help desk manager Jordyn Maglalang '12 (center) helps Anthony Davis '15 (left) with his cell phone. In the back, Jordan Riddle '14 helps Paige Maurer '15 (right) with her laptop.

## Information Technology Services Fosters Independence, Inclusion

August 22, 2011

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – While in the process of adding a few finishing touches to the grade-determining final project that has taken all semester to complete, suddenly the laptop screen goes black and the computer refuses to start.

For many college students, this nightmare scenario rings a bell familiar enough to evoke waves of paralyzing terror and accompanying nausea.

In situations where computers seem to become the enemy, Illinois Wesleyan University's Information Technology Services (ITS) staff members are on-hand to remind the campus community it's possible to "become friends with technology," said ITS Coordinator Lisa Caughron. "We're very empathetic to crises such as these, so we already have strategies in place to deal with them. Computer problems can be frustrating; as much as it's possible to do so, we try to plan for those situations."

At Illinois Wesleyan, ITS works toward its mission to "create a culture of life-long learning" and "provide the best information resources possible" by working as partners with the campus community. "Once upon a time, ITS was just come in and ask questions," said Caughron. "But we've started focusing on the big picture, on showing you technology is not something that has to impinge on your lifestyle. We want people to understand that technology can be a tool that really enhances your life."

The ITS Help Desk staff provides service to the campus community in the form of guidance, resources and advice, and the Service and Repair staff provides diagnostics and personal computer repairs at no charge for Illinois Wesleyan students, staff, faculty and retirees. Services are available via telephone at (309) 556-3900, email at **it@iwu.edu**, online at both the ITS website and blog and in person at the HelpDesk center at the ITS House, located across from Shaw Hall at 1311 N. Park St.

This year, ITS focused on a goal of empowering clients by promoting self-help and independent learning among the "technologically challenged." The first step involved redesigning the setup of the HelpDesk center. "The redesign was really meant to shift the focus to partnering with our users," said Caughron, who hopes to break the illusion that ITS staff members work some kind of magic when they solve computer problems. "Rather than just having people drop off their computers and leave, we now invite them to sit and work through some of the more common issues with us, so hopefully they can be more prepared to deal with their technology issues in the future."

The conviction that technology really is for everyone—no matter how foreign it seems at times—is also reflected in the ITS practice of hiring student workers who are not necessarily computer whizzes. "Working with ITS is a great opportunity for anyone who has the desire to learn, work hard, develop themselves and improve their skill levels," said Caughron. "We don't discriminate between majors when filling positions; we hire those who want to communicate and help people."

For Jordan Riddle '14, a music education major from LeRoy, Ill., all apprehensions about entering a work field in which she didn't feel entirely comfortable disappeared completely when she started at ITS. "I was kind of worried at first because I'm not amazing with computers, but at the interview they really stressed professionalism and customer service," she said. "I'm

pretty outgoing, and there's an endless opportunity to help people here, which is a really nice feeling. Every time I'm off the phone after resolving a problem, I want to give someone a high five."

*Information Technology House*

Riddle is one of many ITS staff members who have kept busy during the 2010-2011 academic year with accomplishments including equipment and server upgrades, website improvements and databases for things like new meal plan records. "We are very multi-dimensional and multi-faceted," said Caughron, noting that ITS staff positions range from instructional technologists and lab support specialists to web presence designers, administrative computing specialists, computer support specialists and the network group, which creates and supports the framework for the University's entire technology infrastructure.

In addition to providing individual services, ITS also functions as Illinois Wesleyan's escort into the increasingly technological age of higher education. "On the academic side, we try to support those who wish to use technology to enhance learning. Moving from a non-technology course to a technology-based one can be difficult," said Caughron, citing technologically advanced resources available on MyIWU accounts like chat features and email lists as well as MoodleRooms, which now allow Illinois Wesleyan students to turn in homework, take tests and complete projects online. "We can support faculty members throughout that process, and it adds a new dimension of information sharing."

In the future, ITS hopes to tackle projects like creating a backup Web presence, expanding wireless, improving internet bandwidth, implementing video conferencing and encouraging a green initiative regarding printing and copying. For now, however, staff members have their hands full in the aftermath of the most recent summer projects: the long-awaited transitions to Gmail and OmniUpdate, upgrades to wireless, the campus card system and the Smart Call system. "During the summer we usually complete our larger projects, because we try to plan for being busy seasonally," said Caughron, who explained that in the long run, these upgrades will make things faster and simpler for MyIWU users.

And although the constantly changing world of technology can be difficult to keep up with, Caughron believes ITS can continue to help the Illinois Wesleyan community not only navigate it, but embrace all the possibilities it has to offer. "Technology is always changing," she said. "That's what we're here for."

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