The City College of New York

NEWSLETTER OF THE
CCNY OFFICE OF
INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY

TechTALK

Fall 2016

Special information security issue!

Tech Center
Main Office (NA 1/301)
(212) 650-7878
servicedesk@ccny.cuny.edu
http://www.ccny.cuny.edu/it

Monday - Friday
7:00am to Midnight

Intersessions
9:00am to 5:00pm

Saturday
9:00am to 6:00pm

Sunday
Noon to 6:00pm

Service Desk

Monday - Thursday
8am to 7pm

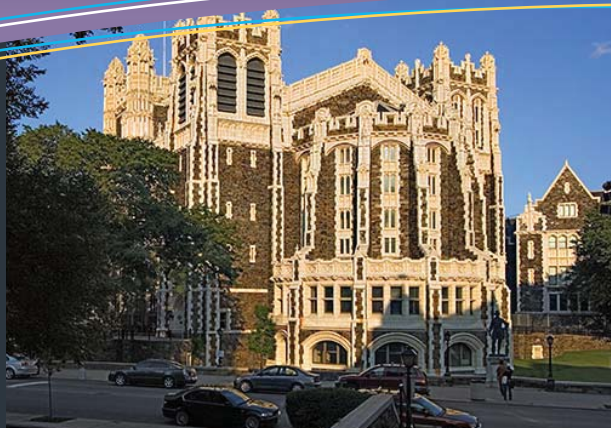Friday
8.30am to 6.30pm

Intersessions
9:00am to 5:00pm

NAC Lab

Monday - Friday
8:00am to 7:00pm
Main Desk (NA 1/501)
(212) 650-6483
http://www.ccny.cuny.edu/it

Study and Collaboration Room Reservation

webcheckout.ccny.cuny.edu

All hours are subject to change during finals and holidays. For more information contact the Service Desk at ext. 7878

Message from Ken Ihrer, AVP and CIO

Welcome to the Fall 2016 issue of *TechTalk* – the Office of Information Technology's (OIT) newsletter. As always, we have been very busy on your behalf making progress on many fronts.

I would like to introduce a new employee who will have a big impact on the Office of Information Technology. Leonardo (Leo) Leon, has been appointed as our new Deputy Chief Information Officer. Leo has spent the past 15 years at Hostos Community College and brings a wealth of IT knowledge to our team. Please join me in welcoming Leo aboard.

We have completed several interesting projects and have many more in the pipeline. In collaboration with the Registrar's office we have built an online change-of -grade application to allow instructors to submit a change of grade for a student.

We have also created a new password reset application that can be accessed at **https://reset.ccny.cuny.edu.** The new utility replaces the old account lookup form that was in use, which was not very user friendly. The new look up tool has a much more intuitive design, which will be much easier to use.

This semester, look for new mobile charging stations around campus. We have purchased seven rapid charging stations - similar to the charging stations you see at airports - that have been installed at various strategic places on site. These multi-unit charging stations are CCNY-branded

and some also function as café tables. This project was funded through savings obtained through the student print quota implemented last Fall semester.

If you are a CCNY shuttle rider, you may have noticed that all of our shuttles now have tracker systems. IT worked closely with the Facilities department to accommodate all of our shuttles so that you can better time your trips back and forth to the subway stops and the Towers residential hall.

Digital Signage is now here. OIT has purchased the equipment needed to operate digital signage around campus in order to bring you the latest information as it happens. We are working with the Communications and Marketing department as well as Facilities to install and manage digital displays around campus. Several have already been installed and more are to come.

As I close, I want to share a bit of good news for faculty and students – we have replaced the outdated laptops available for faculty loan. The new faculty laptops are obtainable from the iMedia department, which is located in NAC 5/220. For students, we have just launched a new laptop loaner program. The details of the student loaner program are available at the reservation desk in the Tech Center in NAC 1/301. On a more sombre note, because of a recent surge of ransomware activity on campus, I urge you to read our lead article on page 2 of this month's issue.

I hope the semester is going well for all of you. We, in OIT, look forward to providing excellent service to our students, faculty and staff. ■

For more information on OIT projects completed and in progress visit: http://www.ccny.cuny.edu/it/projects_in_progress

Your money or your life

Ransomware is on the rise and targeting YOU. How to stay safe

If the title of this article seems a little dramatic, that's because it *is* dramatic. As one unfortunate CCNY professor found out recently, after downloading an innocent-seeming Word document in an email. "I'd been receiving strange emails saying I had a receipt or a bill for a few months. But they were zip files and obviously malware and I knew not to download them. But the day I was infected, the attachment was a regular Word file and, since I am writing a book and contributing authors are emailing their input as Word docs, I thought it was one of those," he says. "The next thing I knew, my computer started making weird noises, as the virus encrypted all my documents, and when I tried to open a file, I was redirected to a website asking me for a three-Bitcoin ransom."

But it wasn't until he called in OIT that he realized the severity of what had happened. "My computer was connected to my backup system, which meant that my backup was infected too, so it wasn't just a simple matter of rebooting. It even encrypted my Dropbox account. After three days of researching how to get my data back without paying the ransom, I realized I was going to have to bite the bullet and pay up, even though paying was no guarantee." And even that wasn't the end of the nightmare. "It took me three days just to buy the Bitcoin. It's not easy. There's a lot of procedure., which really made it a pain in the neck," says

Professor Jones (not his real name). "And when we told the bank it was to pay a ransom, they not only refused to give us the money, they called in the police and the FBI. I ended up having to go to a different bank and not tell them what it was for." By the way, do not forget your password. Bitcoin doesn't have access to

> " **Ransomware exploits most user's bad habits of not backing up their data daily, as well as the anonymity of pay-off systems such as Bitcoin.** "

your wallet or your wallet password so if you can't remember it, or you typed it in wrong at set up (you only type it in once, not the usual twice required when setting up a new password), it is gone forever.

So what *is* ransomware? It's a form of malware that encypts your computer and prevents you from accessing your files and data, unless you pay a ransom. It has been around since 2005 but it is enjoying a boom and, if it hasn't already, it's looking to infiltrate a computer (or a mobile phone) near you. According to the FBI, no one is safe. Businesses, colleges (including City College where in recent weeks, no fewer than a dozen employees have been victims of ransomware attacks), government agencies, hospitals, even the police themselves, have all been targeted, and a recent report put out by the cyber-security company Kaspersky Lab, says that ransomware Trojans were the main theme of the first quarter of 2016 and could well turn out to be the main problem of the year." And when they say "problem" they mean *problem.* These ransomware cybercriminals are not playing; they're after your money - as much as they can get, as quickly as they can get it - typically demanding payments of anywhere between $500 and several thousand dollars to be paid within 24-48 hours of hijacking your computer.

Most people's lives are embedded in their computers in far more detail even than a personal journal. Your computer likely contains your passwords, browsing history, tax records, vital documents, bank account information, totally irreplaceable family photographs, maybe even that one manuscript that everyone is supposed to have in them. And if you haven't saved everything on an external hard drive

(and even if you have, but you left it connected to your computer) you stand to lose everything, if you're unlucky enough to be the victim of an attack.

The cybercriminals are exploiting two things: one, most users' bad habits of not backing up data, and, two, the proliferation of anonymous money-changing systems – such as Bitcoin, or Moneygram payments to untraceable prepaid cards – making the criminal equally anonymous and untraceable. Unfortunately, as with any ransom-based crime, the more people pay up the more attractive it is as a crime. Even more unfortunately, paying up is no guarantee you'll get your data back. And, even if you do, the whole nail-biting process is exremely stressful.

"The bottom line is, there are no such things as forgiveable clicks," says another CCNY staffer, who recently downloaded ransomware on to her computer. "I was in a rush and I clicked an attachment without thinking, and before I knew it a message had appeared on the screen telling me that my files were being encrypted. Then my background vanished, and some instructions came up." She immediately contacted the OIT office and her computer was replaced. "I was lucky," she says. "I had CrashPlan, which meant the whole thing was backed up, and my computer only needed to be cleaned and reimaged." Which doesn't quite do justice to the behind-the-scenes work of the OIT technicians, administrators and security officers the incident required. Each attack consumes precious time and resources as we remediate and investigate every ransomware attack. As the trend increases there aren't enough backup coputers to replace the compromised ones. And you aren't backed up, it's lost forever. Cyber-security firms have built up various fixes for the different kinds of ransomware, but new types of malware are being developed all the time and the chances of you getting your data back without paying up are virtually non- existent.

"Even once I personally paid the ransom of $2,000, we still weren't sure we'd get anything back. And we were

> **"The total financial cost was $1,995, but emotionally it was much more. I was having a heart attack. I literally still have a stiff neck from the experience!"**

also afraid that inputting the code would trigger another malware. But I had no choice," says Professor Jones, of his ten-day ordeal. "The total financial cost was $1,995, but emotionally it was much more than that. I was having a heart attack! I literally still have a stiff neck from the experience." Professor Jones now disconnects his external back up drive from the computer as soon as it has backed up his data. And he has now three backups, including one in the cloud. "It's a pain. But I've given up being too lazy to back up. The alternative is really not worth it!"**TS** ∎

E.L.U.D.E. cyberthreats

Cyberthreats can't be totally eliminated, but following these best practices will go a long way to protecting you from the worst

Environmental awareness of cyber threats, risks, and best practices is essential protection
- When possible, physically secure your computer with security cables/plates; always lock building/office doors and windows when your devices are unattended
- Never leave mobile devices unattended; thieves can steal your hardware & identity
- Use discretion when transmitting personal information via online resources (especially email and social networks): treat sensitive information like it could be there permanently, accessible to everyone.

Logins and passwords should always be enabled and strong
- Use strong passwords that cannot be easily guessed or deciphered: at least eight characters including upper and lower case letters, numerals and symbols. Avoid using simple identifiers like common names, dictionary words, birthdates, and anniversaries
- Never, ever share your password or your account when logged in!
- Passwords are compromised all the time, so change your password at least every 90 days and use a unique password with each account (with a password manager, if necessary)
- Always require a password to login to your computer, especially at start-up; use a screensaver to automatically password lock your unattended devices
- Use a generic user account for daily tasks (browsing, email, working); only use administrative accounts for installing new software, updates and system maintenance
- Always log out of your computer workstations, applications, social media websites, even if you will only be away for moments.

Updates and upgrades provide up-to-date protection against always evolving threats
- The network core in the Network Operations Center in the NAC building, along with fiber-optic On all your devices, always check for and install critical updates and security patches before using software products—including operating systems, applications, browser plug-ins and add-ons; only use products that are currently maintained by their developer
- Always use licensed and up-to-date malware protection to protect against attacks from malicious agents—viruses, worms, ransomware, rootkits, and zombies!
- Outdated programs contain security vulnerabilities; if you don't need it, delete it!

Data and information management: Organize and isolate sensitive information to avoid risk
- Exercise caution when opening unexpected or suspicious email messages or websites, which may contain malicious attachments or links that appear legitimate
- Classify and organize documents in order to minimize exposure of sensitive information (SSNs, financial records, credit card information, health records, etc.). If you don't need it, delete it!
- Ensure critical backup files are encrypted and securely stored in safe, secure backup site
- .Learn how to securely delete unneeded data that contains confidential information, emptying the trash is not enough.

Encryption securely scrambles data, making it nearly impossible to hack
- Learn how to layer file, folder and full disk encryption to protect your confidential data
- Before transmitting confidential data always ensure that data encryption protocols are in effect (e.g. HTTPS:// for websites and SSL/ TLS for file transfer)
- Prior to disposal, storage devices (hard disks, DVDs, USB drives, smart phones, network storage, etc.) containing confidential information (SSNs, financial, health, and academic records) must be securely overwritten or physically destroyed to prevent unauthorized disclosure.

Office of Information Security Resources

October is National Cyber Security Awareness Month (NCSAM). The Internet touches almost all aspects of everyone's daily life, with confidential personal and professional information under constant cyber threat. This month is dedicated to raising awareness about cyber security and providing tools and resources to maintain a safer more secure presence online. Collected here are useful CCNY/CUNY-specific information security resources, including software, newsletters, policies, and guidelines that all members of the CCNY community should be aware of

CUNY Security Awareness Program	This recently updated interactive security awareness program provides an overview of information security threats and best practices that can help you detect and avoid those threats. All staff, faculty and students are encouraged to take it annually. It takes approximately 30 minutes. **http://tinyurl.com/hqssqvv**
CCNY FERPA Tutorial	This tutorial is intended to familiarize CUNY faculty and staff with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) **https://apps.ccny.cuny.edu/ferpa**
SANS Ouch! Newsletters	A free security awareness newsletter edited by renowned information security experts. Each issue focuses on a single security topic, explaining actionable steps you can take to protect your family and your organization. The CCNY Information Security Office maintains a local archive collecting several years. Pick a topic **http://tinyurl.com/hj695y2**
Center for Internet Security Security Benchmarks	An excellent resource to help you secure your everything from mobile phones, to desktop computer, servers and routers. So-called "Level 1" Benchmark recommendations are extensive references designed to guide users in customizing their device settings in a way that strengthens security without compromising normal usage. CUNY is a member of the Center for Internet Security, so use your CCNY email address to gain free access to this incredible repository **https://benchmarks.cisecurity.org/**
CCNY Password Reset	Reset your password for applications maintained by OIT, including CityMail student email, Webmail faculty and staff email, City Central Student Portal, CCNY Wi-Fi network, library databases, iMedia and Tech Center reservations, Tech Center desktop computer login, and more. If you suspect your CCNY account has been compromised, use this utility to immediately reset your password! **https://reset.ccny.cuny.edu**
McAfee Anti Malware Software Download	This CUNY-licensed malware protection is available free for CUNY students, faculty, and staff for installation on personally-owned devices. Download it from the CUNY Portal eMall **http://tinyurl.com/hno4s4n**
CUNY Information Security Advisories	**http://tinyurl.com/zxv8yyx**
City College of New York Information Security Advisories	**http://tinyurl.com/joe78qp**
Key CUNY Information Technology Related Policies	- Acceptable Use of Computer Resources **http://tinyurl.com/hnwnywr** - IT Security Procedures – General (June 25, 2014) **http://tinyurl.com/zn5uwjs** - IT Security Procedures – Wireless Network Security (November 20, 2009) **http://tinyurl.com/z7bcmmv** - IT Security Procedures – Email Auto-Forwarding (December 1, 2015) **http://tinyurl.com/zac2hck** - IT Security Procedures – Data Center Security & Environment Support (November 20, 2009) **http://tinyurl.com/gwmdhxn**
Additional Policy Documents	- Anti-Virus Software Standards **http://tinyurl.com/zh5r8c4** - Breach Reporting Procedure **http://tinyurl.com/hbuafgo** - Policies on File Sharing and Copyright Infringement **http://tinyurl.com/jz9gnjj** - IT Disaster Recovery/Business Continuity Recommendations **http://tinyurl.com/zhw7vd5** - Non-Public University Data Access Waiver **http://tinyurl.com/grvdcuq** - Private Information Advisory **http://tinyurl.com/jlm4f55**

The City College of New York

Information Security
Training Workshops Schedule

WHEN: Tuesdays • October 11, 18, and 25 • 12 - 2PM
WHERE: CUNYFirst Training Room - NAC 5/212
WHO: Faculty, Staff and Students

Why you should attend

Information technology is used in most of the personal and professional transactions you conduct every day. But how secure and confidential is it? This conversational workshop provides an overview of how information technology works while illuminating security vulnerabilities and offering useful tips and resources to help you minimize the risk of becoming a victim of cybercrime. In recent weeks there has been a spate of ransomware attacks, one of which ended up costing the professor who was targeted nearly $2,000. Don't let it happen to you! This workshop explains practical measures you can use to protect the information resources – both personal and professional – entrusted to you.

Topics include

- How to ELUDE information security threats, especially identity theft
- How passwords are compromised and how to use them more securely
- The importance of data backups and software and hardware updates and upgrades
- Understanding encryption basics for data storage and transmission
- What is Non-Public University Information (NPUI) and how do we protect it?
- Useful CUNY and CCNY information security resources
- CUNY information security policy overview.

RSVP to attend or schedule a workshop

If you would like to attend a workshop or schedule a workshop tailored for your department, please RSVP to the CCNY Information Security Office:

Email: ITSecurity@ccny.cuny.edu
Phone: (212) 650-6565
Website: **www.ccny.cuny.edu/it/security**
Location: NAC 5/220

Forward thinking

The logic behind CUNY's policy to prevent email auto-forwarding is ... well, logical

We've all heard the war cry not to mix business with pleasure, and we can all think of a million reasons why it's a good idea to keep them separate. Yet when it comes to work and personal email – if the number of requests to have college email auto-forwarded to personal email accounts is anything to go by – we seem all too ready to make an exception. This in spite of the clear benefits of webmail – auto-save, built-in spam protection, shared calendaring, the ability to view and make conference room reservations via the calendar, as well as sync emails and calendars across multiple devices.

Auto-forwarding – the automated re-sending of email to a separate email address – certainly makes sense if you are forwarding email between personal accounts. But when it comes to forwarding from a CUNY email service to a non-CUNY email service, there are a multitude of valid reasons not to. In fact, even manually forwarding email, although possible, is discouraged. So why?

Convenience vs. Security

It is undeniably convenient to get all your email via one email provider. But this convenience is offset by a number of issues, including the possibility that auto-forwarded CUNY email may be delayed or even fail to be delivered. But that's the least of our concerns. External email providers also block spam. If your Citymail account auto-forwards too much spam email to a major email provider, such as Yahoo or Gmail, it could end up blocking all CUNY email – resulting in a broad and extended impact to the entire college. Added to which, if delivery problems arise with a non-CUNY email provider, it may take longer for our OIT to

> **"If your Citymail account auto-forwards too much spam to a personal account, an external email provider could end up blocking all CUNY email, resulting in a broad and extended impact to the entire college."**

resolve them. So much for convenience. And when it comes to security, the arguments against forwarding are even stronger. Possible security risks include:

- Inappropriate disclosure of Non-Public University Information (NPUI), including Social Security numbers
- Non-CUNY email providers can impose terms of service that give them the right to collect, read, use, distribute or even claim ownership of email that is sent to their system
- It interferes with CUNY-mail anti-spam measures, thus exposing your account to viruses, spyware, malware and account hijackers
- If your alternative email account is compromised, sensitive CUNY information could be compromised along with it
- Auto-forwarding email does not automatically delete the email from the CUNY mail server, which may increase security risks
- All forwarded mail must still comply with the requirements of the CUNY Policy on Acceptable Use of Computer Resources
- If you access your email in an insecure way – at, say, an open Wi-Fi hotspot – your company emails could be visible to an unauthorized third party
- Once your email has left the CUNY LAN, OIT no longer has control over any problems that may occur.

A safe alternative

If you want to receive all your emails in one place, the OIT recommends getting all your email consolidated into one email client, such as Outlook or Applemail, or on your smart phone. As always, we are happy to assist you. Contact the Service Desk if you need help configuring your accounts. **TS** ∎

Meet Our Staff
Kimberly Lopez

Job Title
Computer Labs Manager

Department
Office of Information Technology

At CCNY
14 years

20 Questions

What is your favorite geeky gadget?
My iPad... I can play games, read books and magazines, and take notes during meetings.

What did you want to be when you grew up when you were a child?
I always wanted to help people, and working in the Tech Center, I get to help a lot of people.

What did you major in?
Liberal Arts.

What is the most useful thing you learned as a student?
Practice doesn't always make perfect, but never give up on trying.

What do you think is the single most important tech development of the past 20 years?
The smartphone. It's like a small computer in your hands. And everyone has one.

What do you like most about this job?
Helping students on the computer, and the smiles on their faces when they are happy with my help.

What about working in IT has surprised you the most?
People's wide range of computer knowledge from the completely tech-challenged to the amazingly tech-savvy.

How do you discover new music?
Pandora.

What is your favorite app?
Notability. It lets me make handwritten notes on my iPad during meetings.

How did you get into working in the OIT division?
I had a friend in class who worked in the NAC computer lab. I was constantly hanging out with him, and his boss asked me if I wanted the job.

What do you like to do outside of work?
I love to be with my three dogs.

What gadget do you wish someone would hurry up and invent?
A time machine.

What do you think people will use to communicate with each other ten years from now?
Smart watches.

What gadget that you don't already own would you like to have?
There are so many, but I would love to try out a 3D printer.

If you could choose to do any job you want, what would it be?
I wouldn't want to be any other person than myself.

What is your idea of a perfect holiday?
Relaxing in a warm place, with peace and quiet, and no cell reception.

If you could choose a talent you don't have, what would it be?
To be multilingual.

If you could live in any other country for two years, where would you go?
Somewhere the temperature is always perfect.

What is the hardest thing you've ever done?
Tell a student that all their unsaved hard work got lost in a computer crash.

Is there anything you have wanted to do but haven't?
Travel outside of the US. **TS** ■

Meet Our Staff
Brad Harbans

Job Title
System Administrator

Department
Office of Information Technology

At CCNY
7 years

20 Questions

What is your favorite geeky gadget?
My iPhone 6S+ because it has everything I need on it - email, texts, plus I can remote into other machines with it if I need to.

What did you want to be when you grew up when you were a child?
A scientist, something in genetics.

What did you major in?
Math.

What is the most useful thing you learned as a student?
Problem solving, or that sometimes there *is* no solution.

How did you get into working in the IT division?
I used to be a College Assistant in Client Services and then I moved over to system administration.

What do you like most about this job?
I like my colleagues. We have a good team. And getting to plan and implement large projects.

CDs, music downloads or vinyl?
It depends. In the car it's more convenient to have music downloads or a CD but vinyl has the best quality.

What is your favorite app?
Quora. It is like a forum where people can enter their questions and get answers. Similar to Reddit but the people seem more qualified.

What about working in IT has surprised you the most?
That technology moves so quickly and you have to work hard to keep current.

What don't people know about you that they might be surprised to hear?
I'm Canadian.

What do you like to do outside of work?
Ride my bike.

What gadget do you wish someone would hurry up and invent?
A time machine.

What do you think people will use to communicate with each other ten years from now?
Something like google glasses or some other wearable technology.

What gadget that you don't already own would you like to have?
An autonomous car.

If you could choose to do any job you want, what would it be?
A doctor. I am fascinated by how the human body works.

What is your idea of a perfect holiday?
Relaxing and seeing different sites and meeting new people.

If you could choose a talent you don't have, what would it be?
Play the piano.

If you could live in any other country for two years, where would you go?
Probably Trinidad. I want to live there at some point in my life.

What is the hardest thing you've ever done?
Get through school.

Is there anything you have wanted to do but haven't?
Learn another language. **TS** ■

Marta Szkutnik

Congratulations on winning the CUNY Excellence in Technology Award

The Office of Information Technology is very proud to announce that Marta Szkutnik has won the CUNY Excellence in Technology Service Award. These awards acknowledge IT staff and managers for their outstanding work and customer service during the year.

"Delivering excellent products is attainable only with a keen understanding of campus needs, and a sense of personal responsibility and urgency to deliver that service," says Vern Ballard, Director of Front Line Services & Information Security. "Marta exemplifies all these qualities. She's the epitome of prof-essionalism and grace under pressure."

In 2000, Marta Szkutnik joined CCNY's Office of Information Technology (OIT) and quickly moved up to IT Support Manager working in the offices of Administrative and Academic computing. It didn't take long for her meticulous attention to detail, effectiveness as a project leader and facilitator, quick wit and logistical acumen to move her up the ranks to her current position as Project Manager. On any given day she can be found simultaneously overseeing dozens of critical and time-sensitive ventures, from initial gestation as ideas on napkins to completed million-dollar projects.

Multiple areas on campus are currently undergoing technology upgrades. Recent-ly, Marta has facilitated the adoption of smart technology upgrades in over two dozen classrooms and office spaces - overseeing the installation of everything from projectors, smart boards, computer workstations, printers, lighting controls, and air quality controls, to people and lab rats, all while maintaining normal operations. "It's pressure," says Marta. "But it feels good to see the students in their new classrooms."

Sometimes small projects have a big impact. For example, in spring 2015, after nine months of Marta working behind the scenes, OIT deployed the Nemo-Q

> "On any given day, Marta can be found simultaneously overseeing dozens of critical and time-sensitive ventures, from initial gestation as ideas on napkins, to completed million-dollar projects."

system to alleviate student traffic in the Enrollment Management areas – reducing waiting times and improving customer service ten-fold. But the project Marta is most proud of is also her biggest to date: the epic move from the Marshak Science Building to the Center for Discovery and Innovation, the new state-of-the-art facility on South Campus. A magnet for international research and learning for students, faculty, and scientists working across multiple disciplines, the building features approximately 200,000 square feet of space for advanced research in key interdisciplinary fields. City College's gateway to the future, the Center for Discovery and Innovation showcases the most up-to-date VOIP phones, multiple smart conference rooms and up-to-the-minute IT and climate control systems.

Marta worked tirelessly, orchestrating over 300 researchers in their migrations from the long-held offices in the Marshak Building to the cutting-edge facilities in the Center for Discovery and Innovation - including coordinating the moves of high-precision equipment, setting up computing and telecommunications resources, and accommodating all the researchers needs. "It was a tremendous undertaking to move that many people, as well as get the building ready," says Marta. "Making sure there was as little down time as possible meant asking everyone the right questions, so that I was able to make sure the environment was ready for everyone to make as smooth a transition as possible as soon as they arrived."

The OIT has always known how great Marta is, but we are thrilled to see her acknowledged with the CUNY Excellence in Technology Award. As for Marta, when asked what it is she most likes about her job, Marta says simply: "I like making people happy." **TS** ∎

Being There: Virtual video conferencing with BlueJeans
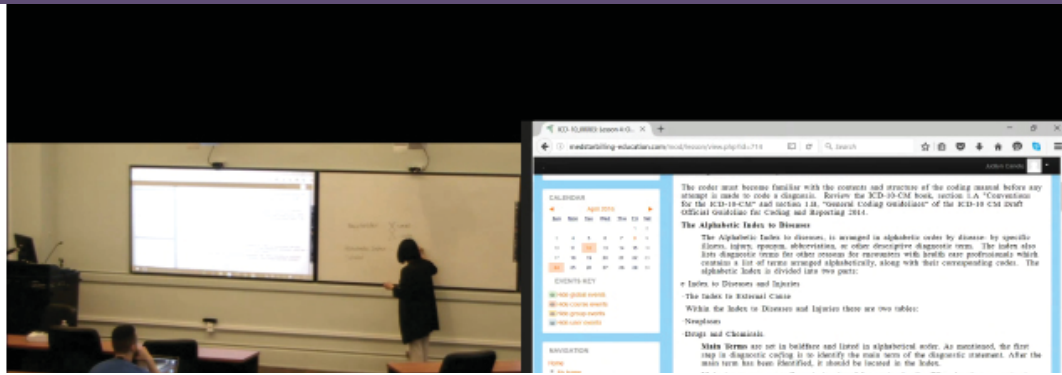
Nothing can beat the experience of a live lecture or meeting – the ability to ask questions, to make eye contact, to see the whiteboard as it is being worked on, to interact with fellow collaborators. But getting to class or to a meeting in person isn't always possible. Sickness, last-minute childcare problems, even harsh weather conditions, can keep participants away. In that case, the video conferencing tool, BlueJeans, might be the next best thing to actually being there in person. And, unlike teleconferencing, you can actually see everyone in the meeting, which ensures that people are not multi-tasking when they should be focusing entirely on the meeting. Studies show that participants' average attention spans rise to 35 minutes for a video call from 23 minutes for an audio call.

Nowadays, with smartphones, tablets and other mobile devices in almost universal use, people are no longer tethered to a specific location to collaborate or participate in events. BlueJeans is used by over 140 universities and community colleges in more than 10 countries, including Berkeley, Penn-Wharton, Boston University, Stanford University and CUNY. The OIT is happy to announce that City College has licensed the use of BlueJeans for 10-15 meetings or lectures per month. The platform extends high quality video collaboration, allowing groups of up to a maximum 100 participants globally, to share everything from slides to trailers to spreadsheets on any device. It also enables interactive video events with up to 3,000 participants. All that's required is video conferencing ability (via phone, computer, tablet, or camera with a microphone) and a fellow participant. BlueJeans also automatically records for subsequent streaming, as soon as there are two or more participants.

BlueJeans video conferencing has been integrated with Canvas, one of the leaders in the learning management system (LMS) market, which enables real-time, online collaboration for students, faculty and staff. There are so many benefits, including: the ability for professors to make themselves available to students after hours; student study groups; staff and faculty collaborations (department

> **"It is worth working through the bugs to have that interaction with the students. You can't get that with podcasts."**

meetings and training held over video), and early-round job interviews conducted via BlueJeans to cut travel expenses.

"It's not hard," says Kelli Crosby, Manager of iMedia. "People may have different technical requirements, but these can all be negotiated quite easily." Kelly is able to keep an eye on classes remotely, monitoring how things are going and jumping in if professors need any help.

"The platform is little buggy," says Professor Christine Li, who used it to deliver her *Introduction to Genetics* - a required course. "But luckily, we had an OIT person on hand to help when the signal kept dropping out." She is committed to using the system in the future. "It is worth working through the bugs to be able to have that interaction with students. You can't get that with podcasts," says Professor Li, who delivered the lecture to 200 live students and 10 remote students. "BlueJeans, the company, was also very helpful and responsive," she says.

Kelli attributes some of the problems with dropping signals to the fact that Professor Li was using Wi-Fi and working out of the basement of Marshak, which currently has the spottiest Wi-Fi access of all the college buildings. "In Shepard, the system is less buggy because everything is already in the classroom plus the internet access is hard-wired, as opposed to Wi-Fi." Using the platform requires a little patience right now, but the more you use it the easier it gets. In addition, connectivity issues will decrease over time, as the OIT keeps improving Wi-Fi access. In the meantime, those who are using it are excited about having it on campus. "It was very helpful," says Li. "I will definitely use it again." **TS** ∎

Find out more

http://goo.gl/sDOXAb

best back to school apps

A TechTalk Guide to ease you into productivity

Venmo
iOS
Android
Free

Download the app and enter your bank account or debit card info and then transfer money to and/or from friends and family instantly. Perfect for splitting the check, paying back friends etc. And the transaction is free, unless it involves using a credit card or non-major debit card. However, stick to using it with friends because it's easy for someone to cancel a payment after the recipient has been notified by Venmo that payment has gone through. Best to use PayPal (which owns Venmo) for transactions, such as selling things on CraigsList. Or use Venmo and wait for your bank to confirm the funds before handing off your used laptop.

Inkling
iOS
Android
Free

Inkling's interactive eBooks are designed to help you learn, study, and discover anything, from anatomy to photography to travel to cooking – even medicine, with hundreds of hi-res diagrams that let you strip off the labels and test what you know. The For Dummies e-book selection includes everything from learning to play guitar to coding Java and CSS. There are even instructional videos.

Chegg
iOS
Android
Free

This fabulous app will save you up to 90 per cent on textbooks by allowing you to rent the books and textbooks you need. Instantly access eTextbooks while you wait for your book to ship. Just search for the book you want and put in an order. When you have finished with it, returning rentals is free! Just send back your books in any box with the prepaid shipping label. You can also buy books if you want.

Circle of 6
iOS
Android
Free

This fast, easy-to-use and award-winning personal safety app was originally designed for college students to prevent sexual violence. The app lets you add up to six people from your contacts to join your circle. You can then contact them in an emergency. Two taps lets your circle know your GPS location and how they can help – e.g., "Come and get me, I need help getting home safely!" or "I need to talk!" or "Call and pretend you need me. I need the interruption." It's the mobile way to look out for each other on campus. It works with as few as three friends but the app recommends you have six.

iTunes U
iOS
Android
Free

iTunes U allows colleges and universities to offer courses at no charge to anyone who wants to take them. Currently, over 800 colleges and universities from across the globe provide content to iTunes U for post-secondary learning. After downloading course content, you have complete control to process it however/whenever you wish.

Google Translate
Android
Free

Type to translate 90 languages. You can also use handwriting if you are traveling and need to ask for the bathroom. You can even speak and have it speak back. Or use your camera to translate text instantly in 26 languages. ■

7 Minute Workout
iOS
Android
Free

According to a recent study, even one minute of all-out exercise may provide the health benefits of a 45-minute routine. That's the thinking behind this workout app. So next time you think you don't have 45 minutes to stay in shape, try taking seven. **TS** ■.

Another star in OIT: Congrats to Dixon Ansong

Winner of the President's latest S.T.A.R. Award

It has been a good month for the Office of Information Technology (OIT) in the recognition department. First we were told that IT Project Manager Marta Szkutnik had won the CUNY Excellence in IT Service Award. And now we are thrilled to announce that Dixon Ansong, Manager of User Services & IT Security, is the latest OIT recipient of the President's S.T.A.R. Award, making him OIT's third winner. "It was a complete surprise." says Dixon. "Especially considering that this is such a large institution with a large pool of nominees to choose from. It's a recognition that will always remind me to continue to give my best whether in the limelight or not." It's this very ethos that qualifies him for the award.

Dixon was hired in 2004 as an IT technician in Humanities and moved over to OIT in 2008 to work on the Help Desk. Within 12 months he had been promoted to OIT Help Desk Manager, managing six part-time employees, and becoming designated CUNYfirst Application Security Liaison (ASL). Between 2012 and 2015 he migrated City College to the SysAid Service Desk software platform; oversaw the growth of his department from six part-time to 12 part-time and full-time technicians; developed and maintained Tech Center technology deployments; improved staff development and procedural efficiency; and began cross-training Service Desk and Tech Center staff. He also integrated iMedia audio-visual support into Client Services. Dixon's remarkable skills and willingness to lead in implementing solid solutions have fostered the mature growth of Client Services.

Dixon is characterized by an unflappable patience and professionalism combined with the wisdom to listen carefully and make effective decisions. In the time that Dixon has led Client Services, he has assembled a team that mirrors these characteristics, maintaining an environment that allows his staff, colleagues, and collaborators to be

> "Working in OIT is something of a high wire juggling act, often without a net," says Vern Ballard, Director of Front Line Services and Information Security. "Dixon is our master acrobat."

productive and efficient. "I like to build and surround myself with great teams. I know that leadership and learning are indispensable to each other," says Dixon. .

Dixon's job is a challenging one. Client Services provides college-wide support for 15,000 students and over 4,000 employees within arguably the most heterogeneous collection of departments, personnel, and equipment in CUNY.

Client Services is responsible for critical OIT training, system deployment, and troubleshooting. They respond to dozens of IT service incidents and requests per day (over 5,100 last year). Supporting an environment with thousands of devices, Client Services maintains college-issued technology assets, including desktop computers, mobile devices, and servers, using every conceivable permutation of Macintosh, Windows, LINUX operating systems and software applications – interconnected to a wide range of peripherals (i.e. network storage, printers, and audio-visual equipment). Client Services is the hub that keeps the wheels of OIT rolling. Dixon is the animating force regulating this hub. It's a challenge that Dixon enjoys. "I love technology. In this field you just keep learning. And I like to exercise my critical thinking to achieve goals that impact the lives of others."

Given CCNY's challenging budgetary and staffing constraints, adapting to constant, unpredictable technology changes, while trying to anticipate the long-term, potentially devastating implications of slight nuances in adopting them within our environment, is no cake walk. "Working in OIT is something of a high wire juggling act, often without a net," says Vern Ballard, Director of Front Line Services & Information Security. "Dixon is our master acrobat." **TS** ∎

Student Services
e-services available to CCNY students

Blackboard	Allows you to receive course content, take tests and quizzes, participate in on-line discussions with students/instructor(s), submit course materials, view course syllabus, etc. **cunyportal.cuny.edu**
CCNY Guide App	A one-stop information hub to help new students navigate the first year at CCNY. Find event schedules and contact information, as well as network with other incoming students via social media. Download from App store
ePermit	An online system for requesting approval to take a course at another CUNY college. Solely for CUNY students, faculty and staff. **cunyportal. cuny.edu**
DegreeWorks	A web-based degree audit and academic advising tool. It displays all courses taken, a checklist of requirements still outstanding to graduate, active stops on a record, current registration appointments and initial English and Mathematics placement levels, etc. **cunyportal.cuny.edu**
CUNY eMall	A virtual shopping plaza offering a variety of discounts and other promotional programs, MacAfee, phone plans and FREE software to faculty, staff and students. **cunyportal.cuny.edu**
CCNY Libraries	Find e-Journals, reference databases, research assistance, subject guides, and useful resources compiled by the subject specialists at the City College of New York Libraries. **libguides.ccny.cuny.edu**
CUNY Alert	Receive text or voice alerts of emergencies and weather-related closings on campus via cell, home phone or e-mail. **www.cuny.edu/news/alert.html**
CityMail	A state-of-the-art e-mail and communications suite for CCNY students – e-mail, shared calendars and chatting – provided through a CUNY-wide partnership with Microsoft. **citymail.ccny.cuny.edu**
Wi-Fi Printing	With their username and password, CCNY students can now remotely and securely submit, resume or delete jobs over the Wi-Fi and then submit them to print using the Web Printing Station located in NAC 1/301. **http://goo.gl/o8cVgP**
CUNYfirst	Manages students' education and records, faculty and staff employment and benefits information, and all college business operations - including registering for classes, checking schedules and more. **https://home. cunyfirst.cuny.edu**
Charging stations	We have purchased seven rapid charging stations that have been installed at various strategic places on site. These multi-unit charging stations are CCNY-branded and some also function as café tables
CUNYfirst MyInfo	A secondary resource is intended to give students, faculty and staff quick read-only access to critical information, including classes, textbooks, programs and holds. **https://myinfo.cuny.edu**
CollegeCentral	Search for jobs and our mentoring network, upload your resume to Resume Central, view class schedules, unofficial student transcripts, gain access to career advice events, videos, podcasts and articles from over 125 authors. **http://www.collegecentral.com/ccny/Student.cfm**
CCNY Wi-Fi	Use your e-mail userid (e.g.,jsmith01) and password to access the campus-wide wireless network.
Web Checkout	Visit NAC 1/301 to register to use WebCheckout, the reservation system used to reserve study rooms as well as equipment from iMedia. **https://webcheckout.ccny.cuny.edu**
Virtual Desktop	The CUNY Virtual Desktop gives you access any time and anywhere to costly applications you may need for your classes. **www.cuny.edu/ virtualdesktop**
Laptop Loaner	CCNY has just launced a laptop loaner program for students. Now staff and students can borrow state-of-the-art laptops from iMedia. For more information visit the Reservation Desk in NAC 1/301

For help with any of the above please visit the Service Desk in NAC 1/301 x 7878 or email us at servicedesk@ccny.cuny.edu

OIT project highlights

During the past year, the Office of Information Technology (OIT) has orchestrated over 35 comprehensive IT projects. Thanks to the continued support of President Lisa S. Coico and Senior Vice President and COO Leonard Zinnanti, not only have we completed several exciting projects, we have many more in the pipeline which will continue to significantly improve the technology infrastructure at CCNY. The projects listed below, highlighting some of the larger projects executed over the past year, demonstrate significant development towards the OIT's support of the City College of New York's mission. Please check out our page on the CCNY website for more information on projects in progress. **ccny.cuny.edu/it/accomplishments**

Patch Management Implementation	OIT will implement a new patch management system that will us the capabilities to streamline and enhance software management throughout the college, including configuring, installing and uninstalling a wide range of software packages while maintaining updates and patches for Windows, Mac, and Linux operating systems.
GSOE Virtualization Computer Lab	In collaboration with the GSOE OIT is implementing a new state-of-art virtualization computer lab that will host 45 thin clients. The Mechanical and Civil Engineering departments will share this new lab.
Spam Filter System Upgrade	OIT will install the latest version to improve the interception of spam emails and defuse messages containing malware.
Automate Faculty and Staff Email Provisioning	In conjunction with Office of Human Resources, OIT is working on an improved process to provision email accounts for new hires.
Finance Server Upgrade	OIT will assist the Office of Finance and Administration in upgrading and migrating its legacy finance application from a physical old server to a new high-availability virtual environment.
Wireless Enhancement for Steinman Lobby	With assistance from the School of Engineering, OIT will be enhancing the wireless capabilities in the Groove School of Engineering's Steinman Hall lobby .
College Wide Classrooms and Spaces renovation	• NAC 4/220 - Rewiring of workstations and WiFi enhancement in the area. • Admin 207 - Rewiring of workstations and WiFi enhancement in the area. • MR-15 - New wiring for workstations and WiFi enhancement in the area. • CG-245 - Rewiring of lab workstations, WiFi enhancement, and deployment of new network switching infrastructure.
Smart Classrooms A/V Upgrading	• SH-105 - Upgrade of existing A/V system, includes a new lectern. • NAC 6/325 - Upgrade of existing A/V system, includes reorientation of room with two projection screens. • ST-161 and ST- 207 - Upgrade of existing A/V system, includes new lectern and bigger projection screen. These two rooms will also have the capability to project wireless from most devices.
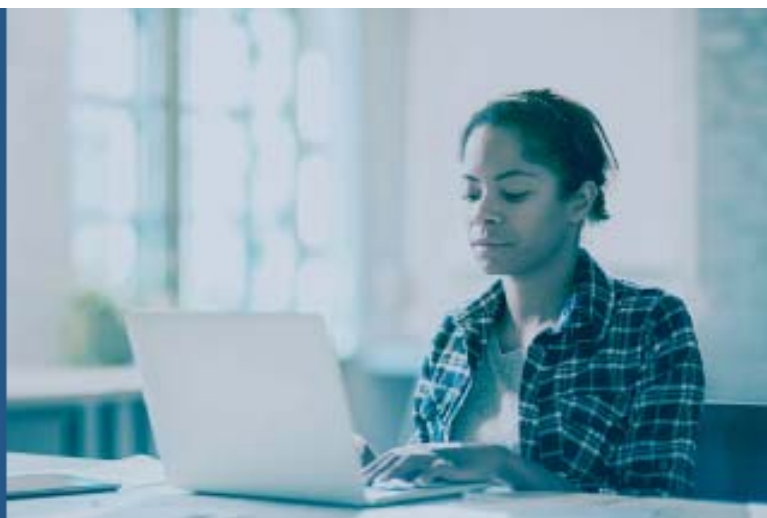
The City College of New York

Laptop Loaners!
Check Out One Today!

Laptop Loaner Program
For info visit
the Tech Center
Reservation Desk
NAC 1/301
www.ccny.cuny.edu/it/laptop-loaner-program

The Office of Information Technology

Charge it Here!

at these locations:

Steinman Lobby

Shep 51 -
Student Club Space

Admin 1st Fl

Marshak Cafe

NAC Tech Center

NAC Rotunda

SSA 2nd Fl

CCNY

The Office of Information Technology