

## MyGateway at UM–St. Louis

Since the introduction of Blackboard to the UM – St. Louis campus during the summer semester of 2000, we have seen unprecedented growth in both the number of courses represented as well as the student and faculty use of the services it provides. As of November 1, 2001, there are over 630 courses, which have online content accessible through MyGateway. There are approximately 9,622 students who are enrolled in one or more of these courses.

Upgrades and changes are currently in process for the coming semester. The ITS staff is working on implementing a major upgrade to the Blackboard software for the Winter 2002 semester. We will be moving to version 5.5 level 3 of the Blackboard software, which will provide new features and improvements to some old ones. The students will see a new "portal" look to MyGateway that will let them snap in various external content modules. There will also be a new web based student email interface. Faculty will see an improved grade book among other features.

In the meantime, courses for next semester were recently added to MyGateway and the instructors of record were assigned to them. Courses that are developed prior to the cut over will be automatically migrated to the new version during the upgrade period. Students will be enrolled in the MyGateway courses beginning the week prior to the start of classes.

There are several resources available for MyGateway support. You can go to the web site at <http://mygateway.umsl.edu> and click on the Help button. This will take you to a site that offers many resources from a Frequently Asked Questions page to a schedule of training courses offered to our faculty. You can also send email to [blackboard@msx.umsl.edu](mailto:blackboard@msx.umsl.edu) to address a specific question to our support team. The Technology Support Center (211 Lucas) is also available to assist students with any password or sign on issues.

*Kyle Collins,  
Principal Systems Administrator*

### DID YOU KNOW?

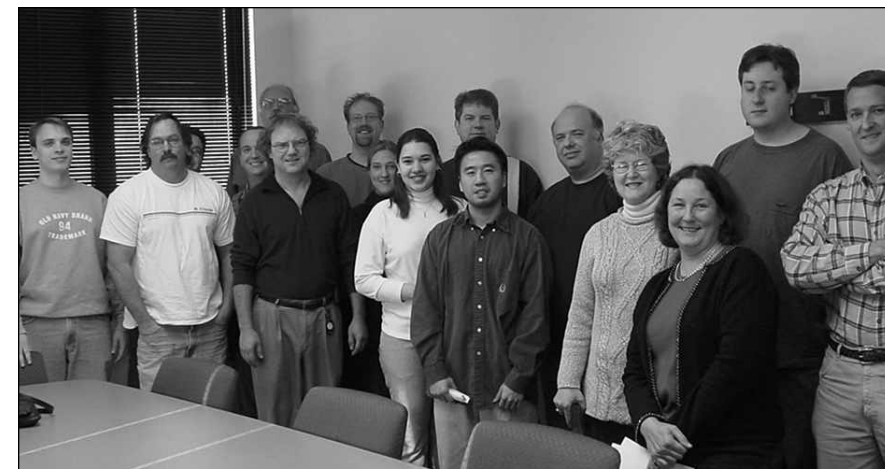
There is a place on campus that will help you with your departmental web page. Did you know that service is free and available to all campus departments and academic divisions. The web office is here to help you out. Perhaps you wish your website looked more contemporary, or professional. Maybe there's really nothing wrong with your site it just needs a little polish. The web office will work with you to design a site that meets your department's needs. For more information give us a call at 516-6060 or email at [web\\_office@umsl.edu](mailto:web_office@umsl.edu). Here are some sites the web office has worked on:

<http://www.umsl.edu/barriger>  
<http://www.umsl.edu/mercantile>  
<http://www.umsl.edu/pott>  
<http://www.umsl.edu/~contas>  
<http://www.umsl.edu/~msc>  
<http://www.umslbookstore.com>  
<http://www.umsl.edu/commencement>  
<http://www.umsl.edu/~physics>  
<http://www.umsl.edu/chemistry>  
<http://www.umsl.edu/~cps>  
<http://www.umsl.edu/services/ur>

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### THIS ISSUE

The diverse units reporting to Mary Fowler, Director of User Services are the focus of this issue of Iterations. User Services encompasses Client Services/Desktop Support, Windows NT/Exchange, The Technology Support Center (Help Desk), Programming, ASP Training, and the Web Office. The units account for thirty eight percent of the total ITS staff. For detailed descriptions of the services provided by each of these units, consult the Faculty Technology Guide. Should you need extra copies, they are available upon request by phoning ext. 6000.

## Computer-based Course Management, On-line Learning and MyGateway

People, new to MyGateway, often think of it as a tool to support on-line learning. In fact, MyGateway (Blackboard TM) is a computer-based Course Management System that also supports Instructors who conduct their courses in traditional settings. I hope to clarify this observation in the following paragraphs. Before the widespread availability of networked computers, the application of spreadsheet software to grade keeping may have been the first significant innovation in computer-based course management. As networked computing became the norm, E-mail became an increasingly important classroom communications tool. Initially, E-mail was used in its traditional role for one to one Student/Faculty and Student/Student communications. The development of E-mail listserves provided Instructors with a tool to make announcements and generate discussion forums. Attachments also made it possible

for a student to submit course work and for an Instructor to distribute course material using E-mail. Unfortunately, because of the general-purpose nature of E-mail clients, messages arrive in a one-dimensional stream with only limited support for segregating messages according to their intended purpose. By targeting specific applications, a new category of software, called "Shared Workspaces," is able to provide added support for focused messages. MyGateway provides a Shared Workspace for course management the Instructor and, when appropriate, Students can post messages providing Announcements, Assignments, Course Information, and Staff Information in separate, easy to find, areas.

As to the role of MyGateway in on-line learning, obviously the most important messages that an Instructor posts contain the subject matter of the course itself. In on-line learning these

"messages" are typically in the form of Web Pages or PowerPoint presentations. As a computer-based course management system, MyGateway provides support for the deployment of such on-line content. What MyGateway does not provide are tools to actually develop on-line subject content. Dreamweaver, a good HTML editor, or PowerPoint, are appropriate for such efforts. In summary and at the risk of oversimplifying the situation, the difference between using MyGateway in a traditional course and in an on-line course can be found in Course Documents section. If Course Documents only contains supplemental material it is "traditional" and if it also contains actual course notes to be studied asynchronously it is "on-line."

*Jerry Siegel  
Associate VC for Information Technology*

## PC and Printer Procurement

ITS staff members receive many questions concerning pc and printer procurement. If you are considering making a purchase for your department outside the Desktop System Plan, please read the following paragraphs. If you need help, please contact Judy Michael by email at [judy\\_michael@umsl.edu](mailto:judy_michael@umsl.edu) or by telephone at extension 6015.

Desktop computing hardware purchases at the University of Missouri St. Louis have centered on the Dell personal computer over the past several years. This has saved the University both time and money. Dell produces several lines of personal computers. The Optiplex line is the standard for the UMSL Desktop Program and meant for use in a business setting. The Dimension systems (as well as the Inspiron laptops) are typically meant for home or stand-alone use.

Because A Dimension has a lower initial price than an Optiplex several departments have ordered Dimensions outside the Desktop System Plan. However, this model can often cost a department much more than an Optiplex in a very short period of time. We find that Dimensions are typically ordered with incorrect hardware, such as modems instead of network cards, and the incorrect operating system (Windows Millennium). This may make it impossible or extremely expensive to connect the computer to the campus network. The warranty is different than the warranty offered for the Optiplex line. The term of the warranty is one rather than 3 years and replacement parts are not guaranteed to be available for the life of the system.

While the University has not formally

declared a printer standard, the campus has adopted the Hewlett Packard printer line as the printer of choice. ITS staff members have considerable experience in connecting HP printers to the network to use with Macintoshes, Windows, and even UNIX systems. Since Hewlett Packard printers are recognized as an unofficial industry standard, software companies produce the necessary drivers to make the printers work correctly. Again, while other printers may have a cheaper initial purchase price, they may cost a department more in the long run. Indeed, ITS staff may not even be able to connect the printer to the network so as to receive print jobs from other systems on the network.

*Judy Michaels,  
System Support Analyst, Principal*

