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Information Technology

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History of the Information Technology Department

The Information Technology Department has played a key support role at DMACC since the college was founded. The department name has changed several times to better describe its function: Data Systems, Information Systems, Systems Integration, and currently, Information Solutions.

In 1991 the department was reorganized into two entities: Information Systems and Systems Integration. Information Systems, would remain supporting the administrative application system (MSG, Banner) providing programming for reports, state reporting, and data capture while Systems Integration, would established a WAN (Wide Area Network) to connect all campuses, establish an internet connection for all campuses, centralize the email and file sharing systems, implement the Helpdesk and replaced “dumb terminals” with desktop personal computers.

In 2002 two departments, Information Systems and Systems Integration were placed under V.P, Information Solutions. Both departments currently report to the Executive Director, Information Solutions.

The original mission of the department was to assist the business department in the areas of payroll and inventory control. It initially was staffed by faculty members in the Data Processing Programmer instructional program in the late 1960s. Superintendent Paul Lowery 's experience at DeKalb Tech in Georgia led him to believe that the faculty and students in this program could provide the payroll and inventory series needed with the support of the IBM 360 that had been acquired primarily to support instruction. Initially one program faculty member was required to provide computer services to the college as a part of his/her job. It soon became obvious that the growing demands for computer services were not compatible with instruction, and a separate data processing department with full time employees was established.

The program was originally housed at Center One in West Des Moines. The initial cost of the IBM 360-30 with 16k, was a major expenditure and was mostly supported with state and federal funds. The computer room required a controlled environment with a narrow range of temperatures to maintain operations. The room had a raised floor to provide space for wiring and easy maintenance. The department has moved several times: Center One West Des Moines; Ankeny Campus--Lower Campus Building 18, Building 20, and to Upper Campus--Buildings 1, 8 and 6.

This mission and scope of services have expanded substantially as new technology created increased opportunities to expand the information available to both students and staff while increasing the efficiency of operations, increasing access to information and fostering enhanced communication. The department also subsidizes personnel by contracting for support for some services and software.

Hardware support changed as the technology advanced, and the college adopted new software for the capture of data by administrative staff. The progression of equipment and contractors over the past 50 years has included the following: IBM 360-30, Mid Iowa Computer Center, Kirkwood, MSG, and Banner 1995—HPUX and Oracle/Linux. Hardware and software also changed for the WAN (wide area network) going from DOS/Novell and Pegasus mail to Microsoft servers, Outlook email and Office 365. Software applications used for classroom instruction and the expansion of computer labs are also supported by the department.

A significant change to the Administrative application system (Banner) occurred in 2000 with the delivery of online “self-service” software, so students could register for classes, check their class schedule and check their grades. Faculty access to online applications were also made available allowing faculty to check their Detail Schedule, Detail Class List, Summary Class List followed later by attendance reporting and final grade entry.

The total number of employees has remained relatively constant for many years. These additional positions were added during the 1990s to respond to the expanding scope of services the department provides: Staff Training, Faculty Training and Web Page development.

Staff specialization has changed to respond to the advancements in the technology. Staff are constantly attending workshops or using on-line tutorials to stay current. The range of services to the college has also increased.

The department is comprised of employees with a variety of skill sets with knowledge of Microsoft Active Directory, Microsoft Office, Oracle databases, Oracle programming, Web services, and .Net. A helpdesk is fully accessible to assist students, faculty, and staff either on the phone or face to face. The helpdesk utilizes a ticketing system that can route tickets to the appropriate teams.

Ongoing challenges include the following:

- Recruiting, employing and retaining qualified staff
- Staying current with the rapidly changing technology
- Maintaining 24/7 support
- Implementing information systems
- Training users
- Financing equipment
- Determining when to have contracted services vs. college services.
- Implementing web based instruction.

Several staff members have headed the department since its establishment:

- Information Systems: Ed Horner, Bob Richards, Larry Wood, Roger Raymond, Arthur Phares
- Systems Integration: Roger Fiderlick, Jay Alcorn, Greg Martin, Mark Clark
- Information Solutions: Mark Clark