Computing Services and Systems Development

Information technology has become an integral part of the academic and research mission of the University of Pittsburgh. Universal computing, networked information, online collaborations, and technology-delivered instruction are now daily experiences at the University's five campuses. Computing Services and Systems Development (CSSD) provides the infrastructure, resources, and support for these services, utilized by nearly every student, faculty, and staff member.

The University of Pittsburgh is showcased on the Internet at www.pitt.edu. CSSD maintains an information technology website at www.technology.pitt.edu.

Network and Telecommunications Environment

CSSD provides the network infrastructure and telecommunications backbone for the University community. The University's data network, PittNet, operates over a gigabit backbone which joins hundreds of local Ethernets into a large, geographically-distributed network and connects thousands of computers at all five University campuses to the Internet. High speed, reliable 100mbs Ethernet connections are the standard for University offices. The undergraduate residence halls are fully wired, with one Ethernet port per student. An extensive consulting and support program is available in the residence halls to support student computing. While off-campus, students, faculty, and staff have access to PittNet through a modem pool of nearly 800 modems.

CSSD also offers a Wireless PittNet service for students in designated public areas on the Pittsburgh Campus. Several sites are available including Hillman Library, the Cathedral of Learning Commons Room, the second floor of Posvar Hall, and the Petersen Events Center's food court/study area. Any student with a laptop computer and the required wireless network card may use the service to access PittNet and the Internet from these convenient locations. CSSD's future plans are to offer the service to faculty and staff and to add new locations on campus.

The latest computing technology offered by CSSD is the Student Web Portal at www.my.pitt.edu. The Portal provides students with a single point of web access where they can build their own web page to view commonly used information such as student services, news, weather, and e-mail.

Extensive telecommunications support is provided to more than 21,000 telephones as well as to voice mail, telephone credit card, and large-group conference call services. Telephone service to the residence halls is provided through an agreement with AT&T.

Resource Environment

The Technology Help Desk is available 24 hours a day, seven days per week, by calling 412-624-HELP (4357) or by submitting a problem report online at www.technology.pitt.edu. The Technology Help Desk provides troubleshooting and problem resolution, and answers "how to" questions on a variety of information technology issues. An online service, Knowledgebase, provides users with access to solutions and recommendations from the Technology Help Desk archives. This interactive resource helps users to identify a problem and its cause, providing detailed instructions and direction on how to resolve the issue.

Students have access to computing resources and services via six general-purpose computing labs and a productivity computing lab at the Pittsburgh Campus. Three labs are open 24 hours on weekdays to accommodate students' varied schedules. The labs offer student access to more than 600 computers including Windows, Macintosh, Linux, and Unix devices. These are equipped with more than 200 of the latest software applications and tools. Each lab features several media stations that offer CD duplication, scanning, and image processing capability. Printing services include high-speed laser and color laser print capability. In addition, more than 100 e-mail kiosks are distributed throughout the Pittsburgh Campus, providing convenient locations for students to check their e-mail or to browse the web between classes.

The University's timesharing service consists of the UNIX, VMS, and MVS environments. Software applications include the database management systems, graphical analysis programs, mathematical and statistical programs, simulation packages, and tape/file transfer utilities that are supported by these systems.

CSSD has implemented a Central Directory that is the authoritative, centralized database of all individuals affiliated with the University. It includes information about students, faculty, and staff as well as various other classifications of individuals associated with the University. A unique feature of the Central Directory is the Finding People service which allows users to conduct a search for individuals at Pitt, using their last name or e-mail username.

Support Environment

Students may take free, instructor-led training classes provided by CSSD. These classes range from beginner to advanced levels, and cover topics such as operating systems, software applications, e-mail, and the Internet. Additionally, self-paced, web-based training programs are available to the entire University community, accommodating users independent of time and place.

Computing Services and Systems Development offers a consulting and evaluation service to University departments on a contract basis. Through the contract program, systems analysts and technical professionals can be hired, from one to five days per week, to provide dedicated, high-level, on-site consulting. CSSD has also established the Expert Partners program to provide departmental technical staff with access to CSSD resources and liaison and training services. This program is designed to assist the departmental staff analyst in delivering high-quality support within his or her own department, coordinated with the overall direction of services provided by CSSD.

Students are provided an extensive array of free software applications and utilities. The Microsoft Campus Software for Students program provides Microsoft applications and operating systems to Pitt students free of charge. Students can receive software upgrades while enrolled at the University and may retain the software when they graduate. CSSD also offers mathematics, statistics, utility, and Internet software products that are either provided without charge or at a greatly reduced cost.

In addition, CSSD provides the University with an Electronic Software Distribution service that permits students, faculty, and staff to install software that is available free of charge according to the University's enterprise and site license agreements.

Source: Computing Services and Systems Development, January 2003.

University of Pittsburgh, Fact Book 2003