

For The University of Mississippi Faculty and Staff

I ♥ Campus Management

By Rebecca Bertrand

Students and computers go together like peanut butter and jelly.

When I purchased a laptop for my freshman year, I realized this four-inch thick piece of technology would be a constant companion throughout my college career. Whether doing an assignment for class, corresponding with family and friends, or shopping on the Internet for clothes, students use computers daily to complete a variety of tasks.

Technological advancements have enriched the lives of students and faculty every year I've been here. The advent of Campus Management (CM) two years ago meant students could manage academic records and many other areas of campus life online. Using the single login of a webID and password, students can check their grades, course schedule, WebMail, bursar statement, and utilize other services offered in CM.

Ally McClain, a senior elementary education major from Modesto, California, relies heavily on her computer. "When am I not on it?" she responds when asked how often she uses it.

McClain says her WebMail account is the only e-mail she uses, and that it helps her keep in touch with instructors about course-work. She believes the 24/7 availability of online services is a great convenience and gives students peace of mind.

"If you freak out in the middle of the night about something, then you can just hop out of bed and check your information online," says McClain.

A new service introduced last spring allows students to order official copies of transcripts online and print unofficial copies from any computer. Before this service, students had to pick up transcripts, even unofficial ones, at the Martindale Student Services building or place an order with the Registrar's Office by fax.

Jennifer Jeansonne likes the new service because she can securely order transcripts from anywhere, even her home in Natchitoches, Louisiana.

"Online services provide easy access to my information, no matter where I am," says the senior journalism major. "I think students view their grades and bursar balance frequently now because it's more convenient to do so."

There are additional services which would help students greatly if offered online. Degree audit is one, since students could closely track their academic progress as they work toward their graduation requirements.

Jeansonne considers herself an organized person but realizes not all students keep meticulous records like she does.

"I think it might be the number one thing that would benefit students at Ole Miss as far as online services," she

continued on back cover



Rebecca Bertrand goes online in the library.

We Hear You, Rebecca!

As Rebecca Bertrand notes, it would "help students greatly" if degree audit were offered online.

Academic departments across campus and the Provost's, Registrar's, and Deans' offices are currently engaged in a major undertaking that will eventually allow that to happen.

Called Transfer Equivalency Resources, or TERS, the project's goal is to establish equivalencies between courses at other schools with UM courses and to get the details of that information entered into the Campus Management (CM) system.

Doing so will facilitate the implementation of automatic pre-requisite and co-requisite checking in CM later this fall. Then the system will be able to approve a student's

registration for a course based on his or her previous studies at UM and other schools.

While it requires a great deal of work from the departments involved, TERS is absolutely critical because so many students (almost 6500, or 56%, of the undergraduates registered for Spring 2005) have transfer hours.

With equivalencies in place and pre-requisite checking turned on, the stage will be set for piloting online audit in several degree programs by the summer of 2006.

So, hang in there, Rebecca, a number of things have to happen first, but it's coming!

For more information and to see the schedule for the TERS project, visit www.olemiss.edu/depts/it/ters/.

From Ufa to Oxford: The (Technical) Journey of Costa Osadov

This past spring when students in the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College (SMBHC) evaluated their experiences there, they did so for the first time online. Assistant Dean Debra Brown Young was thrilled with the results.

"It was wonderful," Young relates. "Students had a two-week window in which they could log in, respond to specific questions, and write individual comments. Once the site closed, we had immediate results which everyone, including students, could see. The process was faster and easier than the printed evaluations used in the past, where we had to manually enter all responses before we could calculate results."

Young credits Costa Osadov for instigating this and many other technological advances since joining the SMBHC staff as microcomputer consultant in 1997. Osadov insists that anyone who knew him growing up in Ufa, Russia, would be surprised by this.

"No one expected me to work in a technical field," he maintains. "I went through a five-year program to get a master's in English, not literature, but linguistics, and I worked as a free lance interpreter and hoped to get a staff position with a corporation there."

Osadov came to the United States in 1992, "just for giggles," he says, and to pursue a bachelor's in English from Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee. In 1996 he sought to enter the master's program in English at the University of Mississippi but found he had a year's wait before he could start. The wait proved fateful, since he spent it working as a data processing operator for the Wal-Mart Distribution Center in New Albany.

"They have a fantastic data processing system which ties together their warehouses and trucks so products can be

moved quickly where they need to be," he explains. "One part of the system even communicated data to these little screens on forklifts, so in learning that I actually had to get my forklift license!"

Osadov's technical experience caught the eye of Dan Williams, then chair of the UM English Department, who referred him to the job at the Honors College.

"They wanted their own in-house system for maintaining student records and sharing files between staff members," Osadov recalls.

Osadov soon had the new system up and running, giving staff and students access with a username and password from any computer in the building.

"As far as I'm concerned, that's one of my biggest achievements," he notes. "Eventually we started providing secure storage space for users, so you can work on a document, save it to your file, and then open it from any computer on the system. We offered wireless access in the entire building by 2002, and within the past year I set up a remote access server, so now you can connect from anywhere in the world. Once you verify your credentials, you can access your work as though you were in the building."

Osadov's zeal for connectivity prompts a futuristic comparison from Doug Sullivan-Gonzalez, SBMHC Dean.

"Costa personifies the Borg on Star Trek," enthuses Sullivan-González. "He moves at a breakneck pace to connect every place and each person to the SMBHC system. Trying to slow him down is an immense pleasure!"

"I joke with Boss that I don't care who sits in front of the computer, him or a crocodile," laughs Osadov. "I just enjoy

continued on back cover



"My Pride and Joy:" Costa Osadov in the SMBHC server room.

"A Stimulating Intellectual Environment"

is how Dean Doug Sullivan-González describes the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College (SMBHC).

"We look for students who want to participate in their educational program, not just be passive spectators in large classrooms," he asserts. "We offer engaging seminars, world-renowned speakers, and in-the-field training to these kids."

Established through a gift from Jim and Sally Barksdale in 1997, the SMBHC had an average enrollment of 124 students the first four years and then 148 the next four. A record 162 students are scheduled to start this August.



"We have students from the country and the city, from professional and blue-collar environments, from public schools and private academies," Sullivan-González explains. "They are all good folk, and it is a thrill to see them rise to the challenges put before them. Their curiosity and zeal for learning magnetizes the environment and just plain pulls the rest of us joyfully along!"

Future plans for the SMBHC include renovating and occupying the top floor of its building by the summer of 2006 and adding staff to manage the growth in programs and enrollment.

An Announcement from Sam Gordji & Jason Hale in the Office of Information Technology...

MATHEMATICA HAS ARRIVED

That's right, the comprehensive software from Wolfram Research for analyzing and solving mathematical and engineering problems is finally here.

The recent activation of a three-year comprehensive site license for Mathematica is the culmination of over 15 months of cooperative capabilities shopping, financial planning, and academic strategizing among a campus consortium consisting of the departments of Math, Physics, Electrical Engineering, Economics, Civil Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Computer Sciences, and Chemistry and Biochemistry, the School of Business, and the offices of the Provost, Research and Sponsored Programs, and Information Technology.

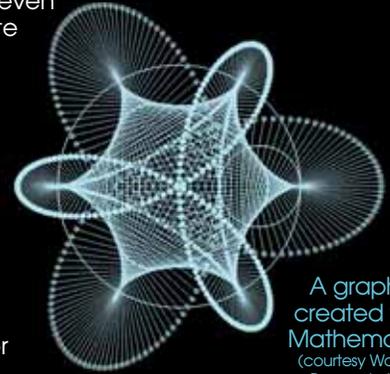
In previous years, faculty and students generally had to fend for themselves when it came to acquiring mathematics software for instruction and research. The idea of obtaining a university-wide license for a computational program had surfaced from time to time, but it wasn't until Assistant Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry Greg Tschumper again made the suggestion in January 2004 that it finally took off.

In the end, Mathematica was the obvious choice since it's considered the gold standard of mathematics software packages by a wide variety of disciplines and

industries. Having the opportunity to learn and use this program will give our math, science, and engineering students a leg up on their future studies and careers.

The nice thing about Mathematica is that you don't have to be Albert Einstein to use it. It's a very accessible program that can be utilized to solve both simple and difficult equations. A powerful, easy-to-use graphics component enables even novice users to create complex graphs.

Workshops are planned for coming months and can be presented to individual departments, classes, or researchers on demand. For more information, please contact us at assist@olemiss.edu, or visit our web page dedicated to all things Mathematica at www.mcsr.olemiss.edu/mathematica/.



A graphic created with Mathematica (courtesy Wolfram Research, Inc.)

For Your Eyes Only

If you need to communicate confidential information, the worst thing to do is send it in an e-mail.



Without proper encryption, e-mail is transmitted as plain text and can be easily intercepted. Sensitive material included in a message or attachment, such as personal records or financial information, can be seen or stolen.

The University's Online Services website now offers a "secure document exchange" to prevent that from happening.

In this application, any active student or employee can transfer files to other students and employees through a secure web interface. Because the information is encrypted, only the user who uploads the file and those they designate can access it.

All parties involved receive notification by e-mail when a file is uploaded. The user who originates the exchange sets an expiration date by which the file and all related information are deleted from the system.

Utilize this new feature the next time you have a secret to share. Just visit the Online Services page and click the "tools" tab to find it.

Have You Been Checking Your List?

In several workshops this past spring, Campus Security Coordinator David Drewrey presented information on safeguarding personal computers.

In case you missed it, here is a very abbreviated version of the "computer security checklist" he distributed. For greater detail, see the complete version (and lots of other great security info) at <http://itsecurity.olemiss.edu>.

1. Install and configure antivirus software on your computer.
2. Avoid downloading programs that might contain spyware.
3. Install operating system patches and updates on a regular basis.
4. Disable unnecessary user accounts and select smart passwords.
5. Deactivate unused or unnecessary peer-to-peer file sharing.
6. Do not run server software unless absolutely necessary.
7. Run personal firewalls.
8. Perform regular backups and securely store copies of files and programs.
9. Shut down computer when not in use.
10. Wipe the hard drive before salvaging your computer.

If you have questions or concerns, contact Drewrey at 915-5210 or davidd@olemiss.edu.

Budget Control System Up and Running

Ali Ling, Nina Cheshier, Pam Roy, and Kamal Vijayakumar (l-r) celebrate the July 1st implementation of BCS (Budget Control System) in the University's SAP system.

"We've worked almost non-stop since mid-March on this project," explains Cheshier. "It required a great deal of care and effort to ensure everything was absolutely right, but it was worth it because this conversion benefits the University in several ways."

According to Cheshier, the first thing most users will notice is a new format for budget reports. But Roy notes the changes in the system are more than just superficial.

"The interfaces for the Budget and Accounting staff will



be easier to use," she says, "and there is more flexibility in availability control."

For more information, contact the SAP Support Desk at 915-5556 or sap@olemiss.edu.

Campus Management *continued from front cover*

speculates. "There are so many people who have difficulty keeping track of their degree program."

Though the transition to CM hasn't always been easy, the system has gained the confidence of the University of Mississippi community and, like a trusty PB&J sandwich, it fits with ease into even the busiest students' schedules.

Rebecca Bertrand, a senior from Kingwood, Texas, is a double major in journalism and political science. She is current president of the Associated Student Body and invites anyone with questions or comments about the ASB to e-mail her at rnbertra@olemiss.edu or stop by the ASB office in the Student Union building.

From Ufa to Oxford *continued from page 2*

building, maintaining, and improving the system. Other technology workplaces can be very impersonal, but here I get to see how my work helps the students and staff. That gives me a great sense of accomplishment."

Osadov's "pride and joy" these days is the locked, dedicated, climate-controlled server room located in the SMBHC basement.

"Our system is completely independent," he asserts. "The only thing I need from Information Technology is a working network connection to our building. Even if that fails, we can still maintain internal communications, and if the

power fails, our battery backup will keep the servers running for at least half an hour."

Though it may seem unlikely, Osadov believes his English degrees were great preparation for his current work.

"Linguistics is all about the building blocks of language, such as semantics and stylistics," reflects Osadov. "You're looking at it as a system and why it works the way it does. Learning technology is the same thing. It comes easy to me, because I'm really interested in how you create these systems that let a lot of people work together and ultimately 'talk' to each other."

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