I T N E W S

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VIEW NEWSLETTER ONLINE

UNIVERSITY OF SHARJAH

1. IT Directors Comments - Robert Irving

Happy New Year! At the beginning of each New Year it is a great opportunity to reflect on the achievements of the previous year and the plans for the next. 2018 was my first year with the UoS and it has been a whirlwind with so much going on, settling in and getting to know the team and the broader university. In 2018 we ticked off some significant achievements, New PC & Laptop Supplier contract with Dell & Lenovo, Contract signed and project initiated to migrate and upgrade our Finance and Student system to the Ellucian cloud, Internet link upgraded to 2Gbps, restructuring of IT, new policy framework developed, New Assistant Director for Security & Governance appointed and a new Service Desk manager appointed, Wi-Fi tender out to the market, Staff security training established, College of Pharmacy online exam infrastructure acquired, IT Architecture project initiated and awarded, Learning Technologies review initiated, Print RFI out to market, and Zoom video conferencing piloted and acquired along with LinkedIn Learning's Lynda.com. So the team have done an amazing job in 2018, and we have big plans for 2019 completing a lot of projects initiated last year such as Wi-Fi and AV upgrades which are burning issues. Our team looks forward to being of service to you throughout 2019 and we wish everyone a successful 2019. Enjoy the newsletter. (Selfie taken on National day with the IT celebration)

2. Ellucian Operational Excellence Award

We are pleased to advise that the upgrade of the University of Sharjah Banner Finance and Student Administration systems are progressing well, and we received the Operational Excellence Award for 2018 at the recent Ellucian Conference. These core financial applications are at the heart of the universities operations and it is critical that they function optimally to support our students and staff. The upgrades and move to cloud is an enormous undertaking that we will complete middle of this year. From there on we will always be on the current version, allowing the university to take a giant digital step forward in streamlining and improving operations.

3. New Service Desk Manager (Mr Omar Harara)

Service Desk Manager Mr Omar Harara. Omar has significant experience in managing IT Service Desks and delivering high quality IT Services. Omar is developing a strategy to re-establish the IT Service Desk as the first point of contact for all of your IT Service Requests, ensuring that staff and students receive quick and efficient resolutions to their technical problems or service requests. This will include renaming the Help Desk to Service Desk, emphasizing the broader purpose of this team, we have a new email address (HYPERLINK "mailto:servicedesk@sharjah.ac.ae" servicedesk@sharjah.ac.ae) and a new contact number that is easier to remember (Extension 2000). We are developing a highly skilled team with all of the tools they need to resolve problems quickly and efficiently. We hope to get this team to full strength in early mid-2019.

6. Online Exams for Fall 2018-2019 semester

More than 3000 students took their midterm and final exams electronically through the Blackboard LMS in a very smooth and secure way. The online exams were configured in 9 courses (more than 53 sections) requested from 6 departments at the university. It helped reduce the time faculty spend in preparing different exams versions, saves paper, auto grades students, eliminate typo mistakes and provide grading equality for students. If you would like more information please contact the IT Service Desk.

7. HR Upgrade

We are pleased to advise that the HR System (Logos) has been upgraded. This was completed in December and provides a much cleaner and more contemporary HR system. There are also new capabilities that will be deployed in the coming months to improve our daily administration of HR activities. Importantly the system now supports an easy method to change your password. **IMPORTANT**: We would like to request that you do this at your earliest convenience. (NOTE: The University Suspended a new HR platform Implementation in 2018, and the project re-initiation is in review. This project, once completed, will significantly improve the digital HR capability of the UoS).

4. New Mobile Application

The University has recently released a new University of Sharjah mobile application called 'UoS Go' on the Android and Apple stores. This application is provided by our Student and Finance application vendor 'Ellucian' and provides a high quality mobile experience for our staff and students. Please download it and give it a try, and we would welcome your feedback.

LinkedIn Learning (Lynda.com)

Following a successful trial of the LinkedIn learning platform (Previously Lynda.com) we are pleased to advise that we have purchased a site license for all staff for the next 12 months (2019). This is a high quality learning tool that can assist our staff to get the most out of our IT applications and also achieve greater professional outcomes by working more effectively. Access is now available for UoS staff via the link here or logging on through the LinkedIn Learning site https://www.linkedin.com/checkpoint/enterprise/login/2294657?application=learning

5. New Job Opportunities website

With the support of the Human Resources department, we have improved the current job application system with additional features and tools. Applicants will be updated frequently on the status of the job and can track their tracking reference number online anytime. Additionally, CV Filtering tools, candidates selection, export to excel facilities are a remarkable changes that Colleges and Departments are benefiting from the system. Finally Extra views and features are added to the Human Resources Department as the main owner of the system.

9. IT Security Training

The IT environment is high risk area for the university. There are constant attacks on IT systems and services and it is essential that the university responds accordingly. The University is establishing a new IT Security team, and they will oversee a range of new security measures to ensure our staff and students are operating in a safe environment. One of the first initiatives is a university wide security training program for all staff, this ensures that our university teaching, research and administrative staff are aware of the IT security risks that are relevant to them, and how to respond. Every staff member needs to take ownership of their role in protecting our environment. You may have seen a recent email about an 'Email Quota' this was a pre-planned phishing email authorized by the university to baseline our current security level. Unfortunately the results are alarming, of the emails opened by staff, 33% clicked on the link in the phishing email. If this had been a real phishing attack the results for the university network could have been devastating. If you clicked on the link please don't worry, the aim of the exercise isn't to catch anyone out or embarrass our staff. It is an important part of developing the security capability at the University of Sharjah. More information on the training will be available in early 2019, and we would be very grateful for your support.

10. New IT Organization Structure

The central IT division of the university is undertaking a significant organizational structure change to increase its capabilities to assist the university to achieve its vision. The IT team as stated earlier has a new IT Service Desk Manager, and we are developing the capability of the Service Desk to be of the highest standard, this will become your primary access for you IT support. We have a new IT Training Manager, to help develop resources that assist staff and students to achieve their academic research and administration goals. We are also introducing a new Research Manager role, to work closely with our researchers to have access to e-research capabilities that supports the research mission of the university. We are aligning our applications portfolios to provide strategic leadership in the delivery of our applications to ensure they are effective in achieving the university objectives.

11. Multi-Function Print Devices

The university has approached the market for print management services to the university. The university currently operates a legacy approach to print services with staff having individual printers. These are slow, have limited capabilities and are expensive for the university to operate. A multi-function (Print/Scan/Copy/Fax) fleet of printers will offer secure, fast printing with duplex and stapling for better quality documents across the university, saving money that can be invested into our teaching and research areas.

12. AV Upgrades

IT will be upgrading several teaching spaces in 2019 and begin a cycle of rolling upgrades for future years to provide high quality capable teaching spaces that meet the needs of our teachers and students. The university has established a University Learning Environment Committee chaired by Prof. Maher Omar, Director of the Institute of Leadership in Higher Education (ILHE) to assist in ensuring that our virtual and physical teaching environments are considered strategically and the best pedagogical outcomes are achieved with the application of technology.

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