

- **New Web Site Coming Soon to a Browser Near You**
- **Canon MFP's Rolling Out During November and December**
- **Basecamp Now Being Used for IT Project Management**
- **New Help Desk Ticketing Software, GroupLink Implemented**

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# Read IT

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

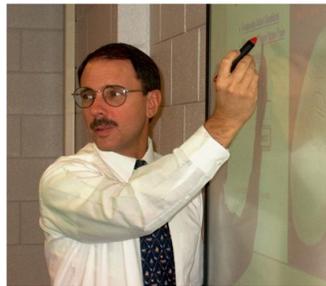
NOVEMBER 5, 2010

## From the Desk of the CIO

If there is one thing that is constant in IT, it's change. In the case of GRCC's IT Team, the change has not only been on the technology side, but also has encompassed their organizational structure. My intent is to bring an era of stability and consistency to IT Leadership for the institution. This will allow IT to focus on serving our customers: students, faculty and staff. My vision is that IT *will provide expertise, value and world-class customer service for information technology initiatives.*

Two initiatives to help us deliver that vision are implementing proper project management techniques and mov-

ing in a direction of an appropriate lifecycle refresh model. The most important aspect of project management is com-



CIO — Kevin O'Halla

munication, so look for improvements in this area in the coming months. In the area of refresh, shortly after starting in my new role, I found

that we had over 1,200 PC's that were four years and older. Seven hundred of these aged machines were located in classrooms and labs. In addition to age, we are faced with a wide array of models. We currently have 62 different models of PCs, laptops and tablets in use making it difficult to effectively image and support all of them.

A sustainable life cycle refresh plan will need to be implemented to give our students, faculty and staff the opportunity to work in a more productive way rather than finding their desktop technology is a barrier.

## Web Site Redesign

by Patrick La Penna

Information Technology, in partnership with the Communications Department, has kicked off the redesign of GRCC's website. In addition to striking visual updates that will improve our marketing to students and the community, there will be a new system to

manage content that will provide easy to use tools to create and update web pages. Drupal is an open source content management system (CMS) that is rapidly being adopted by organizations from every industry. Drupal is open source software that is

supported by a community of developers, and provides a framework to extend the core system to do almost anything with a website. While the software itself is free and is easy for anyone to learn, Drupal is also powerful enough to manage sites with thousands

# Website Redesign cont.



**“Phase one of this migration will focus on academic departments...”**



of pages that receive millions of hits per day like [The White House](#), [Emmys](#), [Grammy](#), [U.S. Department of Commerce](#), [AT&T](#), etc.

Information Technology has partnered with Communications to implement the Drupal system and website redesign. The GRCC homepage will be completely redesigned to give us a brand new look with functional enhancements to showcase academic programs, promote events on campus, and connect to services.

As part of this redesign, we will also be migrating content from our existing website to the new system. Phase one of this migration will focus on academic departments and student services and will build on the ongoing work that the Web

Team has undertaken in partnership with college departments. There has been a careful and deliberate process to review and categorize our existing website content. Any content that is not part of the new site will be archived and available for further review. A training program will be available so that staff members can create and update content, as well as learn new tools like blogs.

Once the new website is live, there will be many exciting updates and developments to improve our service to students that will leverage the strengths of the new website design and Drupal framework. A sneak peek of a few projects on the drawing board are an improved course search,

better information for academic programs and curriculum, and a new and improved event calendar. Keep an eye out for them!

Drupal Higher Education Examples: [Amherst College](#), [Portland State University](#), [Arizona State University](#), [Harvard Science](#), [Stanford Humanities Center](#), etc.

Key benefits of the GRCC website redesign:

- Improved communication to students
- Better tools to manage website content
- Integrated marketing and branding for GRCC programs and events
- Training and support for staff who maintain websites.

## What Technology Makes Sense?

by Kevin O'Halla

Lenovo has come out with a new tablet with awesome functionality. The iPad from Apple is so cool; we need to purchase some! Hold on, the android answer to the iPad may become the industry standard. What technology do we choose? We must keep in mind that technology is not a magic elixir that can cure all that ails us. Technology is just a tool, no more and no less. The challenge for us is in the decision making. Just because we can use a particular technological solution does not mean we should implement the technology. Just because the

newest hardware or software solution is cool and offers new functionality, does not necessarily make it a good fit. We need to ask how this technology can improve outcomes. How does it improve the student learning experience? We must first determine if we need a tool and then go about selecting the right tool for the job. Our starting point needs to look at the question, “What problem/issue are we trying to solve with technology?” IT is in a position to guide that discussion and give advice on what solutions are available. In partnership with

the functional users, IT will assist in the selection of the best tool. In this case, “best tool” does not refer to the solution that IT dictates, or the solution that is easiest for IT to implement. This “best tool” will be the one that solves the problem we defined and works best within the architecture of our campus infrastructure. Oh, and it has to fit within our budget parameters. Together we can make the best decision that will positively impact our students’ overall experience at GRCC.

# Administrative Applications

by David Anderson



The Administrative Applications Group cultivates partnerships and collaborates with our constituents to discover software solutions to meet institutional needs. We

provide technical software support for administrative and student applications including College Advancement, Financial Services, Financial Aid, Classroom Scheduling, Human Resources, Payroll/Benefits, Student Systems and Document Imaging. Some of the major projects the group is working on are document imaging, classroom scheduling and upgrading PeopleSoft Campus Solutions/Human

Capital Management software from version 8.9 to 9.0.

The PeopleSoft 9.0 upgrade will allow for increased flexibility to meet the college needs with limited customizations. Additionally, this upgrade will enhance the student self-service functionality to become more intuitive, improve student and advisor collaboration in order to better facilitate academic achievement and improve our overall reporting capabilities.

**“The PeopleSoft 9.0 upgrade will allow for increased flexibility.”**

## Google Search Tips



Have you ever been overwhelmed by search results from Google or Bing? Many people just put in what they are looking for and ask Google to search. When you get back 1,000,000 results, there's no way that you're going to be able to sort

the junk from the good stuff.

It turns out that there's a better way. You can restrict the results that Google returns! In other words, do a better job of asking a much more specific question. This will get you bet-

ter results. Check out these Google options here:

<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/master-the-google-search-like-a-god-save-time/>

## Who's New in IT

Please welcome IT's newest staff member, James Hitchings. Jamie is a native of Grand Rapids. He attended Kenowa Hills High School and went on to Grand Valley State University where he obtained his Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science. He brings over 28 years of experience in information technology to GRCC. The last fourteen years have been dedicated to the implementation and customization of PeopleSoft applications. His initial PeopleSoft experience occurred during

the 1990's while working for Spartan Stores. Since 1997, Jamie has been a PeopleSoft consultant working for many clients around the country. His broad skill set has already proven valuable to our team and our customers, earning him a Raider Salute after only two months at GRCC. Jamie has one daughter, who is his namesake, and he is the proud grandfather to Olivia, who is almost six. He enjoys golfing and bowling. Most

weekends he can be found refurbishing his cabin on Lake Isabella. During the warmer months you will see Jamie arriving on campus perched atop his classic black 1983 Honda 550 Night Hawk.



Daughter Jamie    Jamie    Olivia

# Project Mgt & Basecamp

by Jeff Kissinger



*“Basecamp is a Web-based project management tool purchased to manage GRCC projects...was adopted because of its versatility, ease of use and communication...”*

Projects, and the management of them, drive our progress and account for a significant amount of work at Grand Rapids Community College. A great deal of time is spent planning, deciding upon, and doing the work necessary to implement projects each year. Oftentimes, there are many tasks, notes, and people involved in a project; yet, much of this valuable project-related data somehow gets duplicated, misplaced, or simply lost in the piles of information that result from projects. This often leads to duplication of effort, wasted time, and project burnout.

No tool can eliminate project pain, but the right tool, used well, can certainly diminish it a great deal. So, what can be done to make it easier to communicate, plan, organize, maintain and retain project information, and hold people accountable to a project? Well, one thing, for sure, is using an effective project management tool that is affordable, easy to use, and is accessible by project team members pretty much wherever they go. That tool, for us, is Basecamp.

Recently, GRCC decided to pilot Basecamp and it soon caught on within several groups here – especially within Communications, Printing and Graphic Services, and IT. Although we’re still working on refining our approach to streamline the processes

and best practices for using it, thus far we have definitely made it easier to communicate, plan, organize, maintain and retain project information, and hold people accountable to the tasks at hand to work toward the completion of projects.

## What is Basecamp?

Basecamp is a Web-based project management tool that GRCC has purchased to manage its projects. It allows multiple people and groups to work with each other, other groups, and even with outside contractors and vendors to complete projects.

There are many tools available for project managers and those working on projects. The available toolset includes:

**Messages**—This section provides a place where those working on a given project can communicate with others doing the same. Similar to a bulletin board, any messages left here provides a comments section where any posts to this forum are automatically e-mailed to project participants. This also includes the ability to attach files.

**Milestones**—Where a project involves several or many sub-projects, the milestones feature is used to list and document those sub-

projects. Milestones are tracked visually and textually, and they also allow for reminders to be sent automatically to whom a milestone is assigned.

**To-dos**—This is where you list the tasks related to a given milestone. When creating a to-do list, you can link it to a milestone, which provides project managers and those working on a project with a streamlined method of identifying and tracking the work being done to complete a milestone.

## Why BaseCamp?

This system was adopted because of its versatility, availability, ease of use, and organizational tools. It greatly facilitates communication on projects, allowing you to work on projects within your department or with another department. It operates within “the cloud,” so wherever you have a browser-based device and an internet connection, you can access Basecamp. This system requires very little training in order to get started. Most of the training involved centers around how GRCC uses Basecamp. All this leads to what has been difficult to achieve with past projects: effective communication, organization, accountability, and a greater facilitation of project-based work.

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To view Jeff's complete article on Basecamp:

<http://web.grcc.edu/informationtechnology/newsletter/basecamp.pdf>

# Email Distribution Groups

By Darcy Swope

A public Email Distribution Group is a centrally-stored list of email addresses that you can send email to by entering a single email address in an email.

Currently we have over 287 email distribution groups, from ALLSTAFF to x100Pilot. Keeping them up-to-date and maintained has become resource intensive, and there are several outdated and duplicate groups. In an effort to update these groups and maintain them efficiently, new group names will follow a standard naming convention.

**Teams: (Short-term / temporary)**

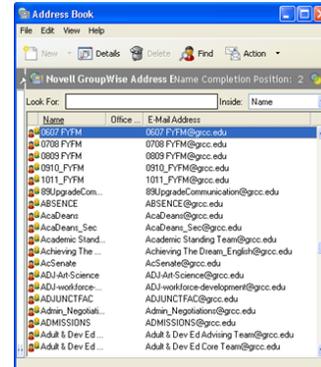
- Team\_90Upgrade
- Team\_x100ePilot
- Team\_InvestiturePlanning

**Groups: (Long Term / Permanent)**

- Group\_LakeshoreInstructors
- Group\_CPPBuilding
- Group\_absence

**Schools:**

- SWD\_Business\_Faculty\_FT
- SAS\_ChildDev\_Adjunct
- SAS\_ChildDev\_Faculty\_PT



This new naming convention will allow users to easily

identify the purpose of the email group, and reduce/remove duplicates.

We will also start working with existing email groups and owners to rename their Email Groups to follow this naming standard. We will NOT make any changes to existing groups, until we have worked with the individual owners/users of the groups.

## IT Facts & Figures

**Some GRCC statistics, all tabulated since July 1, 2010:**

- Wireless Logins: 980,286
- Faculty Blackboard Logins : 823
- Staff Emails: 6,394,237
- Student Blackboard Logins: 16,816
- Staff SPAM: 5,115,389
- There are 1,435 video titles available on GRCC's YouTube Channel.
- Pages Printed: 1,513,166
- The top viewed program is "Hands on Luthier: Galloup Guitars and Brian Morris" - 32,933 views
- Website Visits: 2,788,864

**Current Google Facts:**

- 7.2 billion daily page views
- 87.8 billion monthly searches
- 620 million daily visitors
- 20 PB data processed daily
- 1 global website ranking

## Who Else is New in IT

Scott Minton joined, or more accurately, rejoined the Information Technology's Infrastructure Team in March 2010. He previously worked as one of our great technicians here at GRCC but left us for a time to help out the City of Wyoming. We were able to hire him back as our "Server Guy" this past year to fill a need in our data center. His main responsibility is creat-

ing and maintaining our large server base that is part of the foundation of many of our IT services. Scott has a Master of Science degree in Information Systems Management from Ferris State University and brings many skills learned through his eight years in the field.

Other than loving flowers and long walks on the beach, Scott

has a passion for his family and loves to play with his kids (all under 3yrs). In his spare time he enjoys riding ATVs and hunting with his Dad and brothers with a little computer gaming on the side.



Scott



## Customer Support Center

For all your technology requests, contact us through our Customer Support Center (CSC). We are here to meet all of your technology needs.

Phone: 616-234-HELP (234-4357)

Fax: 616-234-3373

E-mail: [GRCCSupport@grcc.edu](mailto:GRCCSupport@grcc.edu)

**Committed to Customer Service**

## Support Center Standards

During the next year, the Support Center will be focusing on the requirements to meet HDI-SCC (Help Desk Institute – Support Center Certification). We will use self-evaluation tools and work to make improvements to meet globally accepted Support Center Standards. The benefits include increased service consistency, improved customer and employee satisfaction, increased productivity and efficiencies, reduced unit costs and customer downtime, increased ability to satisfy compliance requirements and fiscal accountability. This is our commitment to excellence, efficiency, and service quality based on industry standards and best practices.

*The place to start whenever you have a question or issue with technology is our Customer Support Center. Don't hesitate to call.*

# Training IT Staff and GroupLink by Darcy Swope

During the next year, several of our IT staff will be attending various training sessions to improve their skills and maintain up to date knowledge in the best practices in technology. Using the knowledge of best practices in the IT Educational world, and aligning them to the needs of GRCC, we hope our customers will see immediate and long-term strategic improvements.

During the last year our staff has completed training in various areas:

- Problem Solving
- Support Center Director Certification
- Support Center Management
- Support Center Team Lead
- Mac Support Specialist Certification

As we began our service improvements over the last two years, we outgrew our existing software. As our support expands beyond just tickets and service requests, we had a need for software that would grow along with us. After several months of reviewing software, we selected



GroupLink. In addition to the expanded capabilities, the cost savings of using GroupLink compared to our prior tool, will save the college \$225,000 over the next five years.

During the next several weeks/months, you will see us transitioning from the current Parature platform to GroupLink. During this time, there will be limited customer access to view their tickets and updates. Once we complete our transition, and set-up the customer interface, our end-users will be able to easily monitor the progress of their tickets, service requests, and more. We will be providing additional information in the coming weeks as we move forward.

**We want your feedback. What would you like to see in future editions of Read IT. Send suggestions to [kohalla@grcc.edu](mailto:kohalla@grcc.edu)**