
By Kameron Kidd

At what point did you and your department realize that the campus's wireless technology was in serious need of an upgrade?

"A lot of things happened when the new administration came on board. We knew that we didn't have a very good wireless presence on campus. The system that we had was very old. If an access point went down, you had to go get the access point, bring it back, reconfigure it, and bring it out. Whereas now, everything we have is centralized and controller based. So, we don't have to do that anymore. But, from the very beginning, we knew that the system was antiquated. The new administration allowed us to investigate making improvements, and we did. We spent months evaluating different companies. We had questions; we had briefings. So, we really took our time with deciding to go with Aruba for these wireless access points, and it's been a really good product for us. It really has. So, like I said, it was just the change in administration, the change in culture, and realizing that wireless technology is a recruiting tool and something that students are very familiar with and we had to get on board with that."

Does the Information and Media Networks department have a goal as far as campus improvement is concerned?

"There should not be a classroom that does not have some kind of technology in it. We have systems that might only cost around \$5000.00 to a classroom price. It may be really bare bones—a laptop, a screen, a projector—but it's something to start with. When it comes to renovation, it would be great to include some kind of technology in every single room because it's much harder to install hardware after the fact. Let's get useful equipment in there as part of the process. When we began, we didn't have a million dollars to drop to bring everything up to industry standard; so we had to get things that we needed one piece at a time. Now, we have all those components. We've tested them, and we know what happens if particular pieces of equipment go down. So, we've been able to buy additional equipment (back-up equipment). For instance, we're working on a remote site so that if something goes down, nobody has to know it. The back-up's going to automatically kick in. We're at the point now where we have the equipment to do that, and we just have to tweak a few more things on the network and we can get that high availability, that redundancy that we need so that we don't have to worry."

Do you have any tips on writing STEP grants? What makes for an excellent grant proposal?

"When faculty contact me about writing a STEP grant, I tell them that students want to know exactly how their money will be spent. They're thinking, 'What is this going to do for me?' Really, that's what everyone wants to know when it comes to their money."

Consider where the requested amount of money would have the most impact. You've got to include plenty of information in the grant about how your project will positively affect the students. So, I say that you have to approach grant writing from the perspective of a student. Convince them to invest in you. And that, in turn, is going to be invested back in them. In order to do that, you've got to have specifics, numbers. The grant will affect how many students, how many classes, and how many different departments? That should cause students to think that your particular project is something that's feasible, and we should do it because, for instance, 'it affects X, Y, and Z departments and this many students.' That's what I always recommend. Also, if you need to, you can go to the CIO's website and you can look at some of the past grants that have been successful and see what they did. But, generally, my methods work."

Are you writing any grants currently, or will you be writing any in the near future? (If neither, then what might the next grant be down the line?)

"I'm going to write a STEP grant probably to address zone 1 which is like Martin Hall. I also have the library coming up. However, I may have to address Griffin again because I know it's such a large building, and I know those access points have been in there a long time. So, I'm probably going to look at what buildings were done first, how old those access points are, how many people are on them, and if there's a need I'll get some high density, high speed access points in there. It's just a whole process that I'm going to have to go through quickly because the deadline is approaching. I have to get my numbers together and see where I can make the most improvement. It's a continual process which is good; I don't get bored that way. And, it's constantly changing; so, there's constantly new things to learn."