



Minnesota  
STATE COLLEGES  
& UNIVERSITIES

# THE SCOOP

Office of the Chancellor ITS Department News

Late Summer 2009

## Students First Project Names Director

A familiar face has returned to the Office of the Chancellor ITS Division; John O'Brien has been named the Director of Students First.

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John recently served at Century College as the Academic Vice President from 2005-

"I am excited to be back at the OOC and am especially looking forward to working on an initiative that will literally touch all our students. It doesn't get any better than that!" -John O'Brien

He says that a big part of the thrill of being on a campus

2008 and as the acting President for the 2008-2009 academic year.

He was previously with the OOC as the Associate Vice Chancellor of Instructional Technology and Deputy CIO from 1999 through June of 2005.

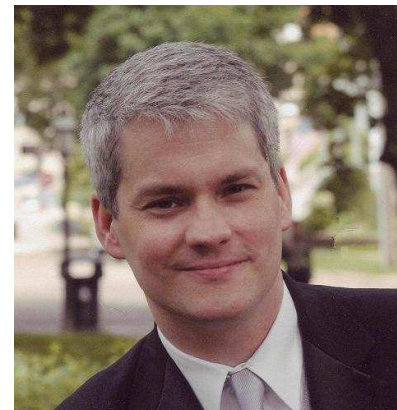
John says that one of the reasons he left the OOC in 2005 is that, as a former faculty member, he felt the call to return to a cam-

pus. Being at Century College allowed him to see first-hand the impact that decisions made at the OOC have on students, staff and faculty.

was seeing how what we do at the OOC on a day to day basis helps students. "At Century I had a new appreciation for and insights into the value of work that ITS does. For example the success of D2L (a project he headed up while previously at the OOC), eFolio, [GPS Lifepan](#), and Second Life. [Click here to see a YouTube video of John's work with Second Life.](#)

As for this new endeavor he says this is the right time for the Students First project for many reasons. "Recent infrastructure changes allow us to build new functionality that we weren't able to build before—we are now able to move to the next level. The Oracle database conversion, which consolidated our multiple databases into one system-wide database allows us to evolve as a system. It helped take down the silos."

He also says "there seems to be more



of a willingness to come together as a system. Folks I talk to seem more willing to consider making changes at individual campuses if they will contribute to the system as a whole."

"Nearly twelve percent our students are taking courses at multiple institutions, and this project will make this experience more seamless." However, all of our students will benefit from this project which includes single search, single application, single registration, graduation planner, single bill/payment, and back-office shared services.

**Coming Next Month:** An interview with Carolyn Parnell, the new ITS Chief Operating Officer

### What's Inside

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## D2L Failover Test—A Success

A complete test of the D2L failover system was performed successfully this summer!

The D2L failover (disaster recovery) system provides a safety net for ensuring that little or no D2L data is lost in the event of a natural disaster such as fire or flood, or a massive hardware failure that would require an emergency shutdown of the D2L production environment. It also provides a means of offering virtually uninterrupted access to D2L in the event of an emergency.

**This successful test of D2L failover confirms that the failover/failback process can be deemed reliable in the event of a future emergency.**

The D2L system was failed over on Sunday morning, July 26, during a routine maintenance window, and failed back on the fol-

lowing Sunday morning, August 2.

The pre-failover preparation and post-failover testing took the most time, first checking to make sure the failover environment was configured exactly the same as the production environment, and fine-

tuning to eliminate discrepancies prior to performing the failover.

During the failover process and subsequent testing, the system was unavailable to users for about six hours, a

little longer than initially anticipated.

After failover, rigorous testing by the D2L server team and D2L system site admin team uncovered issues that were re-

solved by the server team and network team for a successful failover.

After testing, the failover system was made available to users, and D2L was run for one week on the failover system.

On Sunday, August 2, it was successfully, and quickly, failed back to production.

Both the D2L production and D2L failover (disaster recovery) configurations consist of file servers, a log shipping server, a utility server, clusters of application servers, and a SQL database server with SANs for the SQL servers, file servers and log shipping servers. Both configurations are load balanced.

The D2L Failover system is housed at the Centennial Office Building (COB) data center and the D2L Production system is housed at the West Bank Office Building (WBOB) data center.

## Application Fee Report Update

After evaluating the enhancement requests made during the Application Fee Report training, the following changes have been made to the Application Fee Report :

- Multi-campus institutions will have the ability to run the report by campus.
- When running the report in “report only mode”, there is an indicator as to who would receive the reminder e-mail message allowing you to verify the list before sending the e-mail message.
- Application fee date paid/waived column was added to the report.

- There is a link to the Admission’s Office in the reminder e-mail message that is sent. The link will appear if there is a link set up for Link Type 2 on ST6000UG, Web Links tab.
- If the report is run by campus, the appropriate address for that campus will be included in the reminder e-mail message if sent.

These enhancements will be released on October 5, 2009.

### eTimesheet Usage Continues to Expand!

*Current Usage:*

5 Four-Year Institutions

18 Two-Year Institutions

Office of the Chancellor

Total number of employees: 3,300

## eTranscript Pilot Successfully Concluded - Phased Rollout to Begin

eTranscript is currently in production at Hibbing Community College, Inver Hills Community College, St. Cloud State University and Winona State University after completing a successful pilot. ITS staff met with pilot site users on Thursday, August 13th for a pilot debriefing.

A phased release of this new application begins in early September. The first two schools to be added will be South Central Technical College and Metropolitan State University.

Additional schools will be added slowly during fall start-up, with the remainder

coming on board in October.

For more information about exchanging transcript data electronically, preview the four eTranscript training videos and user documentation posted here - <http://www.its.mnscu.edu/isrs/doc/eTranscript/index.html>

## Spotlight on...Carol Wieber

Healthy, happy and adventurous—those are the three words that describe Carol Wieber best.

Working out of the ITS Office at the Quarry Center in Waite Park, Carol works with MnSCU students and staff daily in her Help Desk Support/Production Services role.

Her supervisor, Rod Gerads, says “Carol’s caring nature and her ability to put people at ease makes her the perfect fit in her position at the helpdesk. She always goes out of her

way to insure that the students, faculty and staff of the

MnSCU System receive the very best of assistance when they contact the helpdesk.”

Carol’s family includes her husband John; Sons Jeffrey and Wesley; Step-daughters

When asked what she does on a daily basis, Carol says “The majority of my job is to receive calls from students. They are our future and their success starts with us.”

Kelli and Tracy; Grandchildren Jordan, Caleb, Mackenzie, Nick, Jakob, and Madeline; Dog Toby.

In the past, Carol’s family has enjoyed hosting students from Akita, Japan through SCSU’s summer program. Carol says “We have a son and daughter that attended SCSU-Akita so this was a way to connect and give back to SCSU and the Akita program.

John and I, and our daughter and her family each hosted two students two summers in a row. It was so much fun to take them shopping (LOTS) and have barbecues, and just show them how much fun Minnesota summers are!”

**Favorite book:** Sacajawea by Anna Lee Waldo (The heroic saga of a great woman whose life tells the story of a nation)

**Last / or favorite vacation:** Camping in Alaska on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July

## Communication Project Update

The development team is almost through the second, six-week iteration of the Communications Project. This iteration is scheduled to be completed by the end of August followed by the user feedback session with the task force members scheduled for September 10.

This first phase of the Communications Project involves moving the current Communications Module functionality (scheduling, printing and tracking printed communication) to a web-based design.

## Where Are We?

Can you guess where this outstate ITS office is located?

- Lies on the lake bed of glacial Lake Agassiz, which drained approximately 9,900 to 11,000 years ago.
- Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and The Big*

By the end of this iteration, the team will have completed work on:

- Creating a message template, creating paragraphs (for major paragraph and activity paragraph letters)
- Searching for and editing message templates
- Searching for and editing paragraphs
- Login authentication and security
- A portion of selecting data to include in

*Bopper* died in a plane crash en route to their performance in this city.

- The second city in the United States to own and operate a wireless ISP, and offer wireless internet to its residents.

We would love to hear from you! Please send your ideas for future editions to: [Valerie.Schmidt@csu.mnscu.edu](mailto:Valerie.Schmidt@csu.mnscu.edu)



Camping with grandchildren in Itasca State Park

**Favorite restaurant:** Antons for their fresh hot popovers

**Favorite kind of music:** Classical

**Musical instrument played:** Spoons (It’s a family thing when we’re camping.)

**How did you get your name:** Because I was born on December 24<sup>th</sup> (Christmas Carol)

**If you were a crayon, what color would you be:** Green (earth) or Blue (sky)

**Future Plans:** Travel—with our 5th wheel camper

the message (for the mail merge piece)

On a parallel track, discussion has started on the discovery phase for alternate communication delivery methods such as e-mail and text messaging.

This expansion of the current module functionality is not scheduled to be completed until after the first phase is done. However, the core design of the module will allow for us to easily incorporate these other message delivery methods when we are ready to do so.

- Garrison Keillor named his program A Prairie Home Companion after seeing the Prairie Home Cemetery located here.
- Home to 5 colleges and universities.



**Good Luck!**

(The answer is on page 4)

# Excipio Data Center Study

The ITS Division did quite well in a recent data center study.

The study was part of a bigger State of Minnesota data center study which included all of the State of Minnesota agencies and departments. It was conducted to verify infrastructure data center baseline costs, assist in identifying areas of improvement and look for opportunities to optimize and streamline the data centers.

The voluntary data center study was conducted by the Excipio company in two phases.

Ross Berndt, ITS Director of Production Services, says, " We felt it was important that we volunteer to be a part of it. We were very involved in their process and worked with them as partners throughout Phase I of this project. Phase II was also voluntary. We wanted to have a deeper look into our specific data centers, servers, operations, and potential cost savings and efficiencies."

Phase 1 was completed with the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities working with the State of Minnesota (Office of Enterprise Technologies) to complete a high level overview of the

data centers that we work with.

Emphasis was placed on high level deliverables and a brief overview of the state of our data centers. Upon completion of Phase I it was decided that we would like to take a deeper look into the infrastructure of the two data centers we are a part of.

During Phase II of the data center study Excipio reviewed the system's current supported infrastructure and processes to determine if the current services provided by ITS are cost-effective and efficient.

As part of this analysis, Excipio benchmarked and identified potential improvement opportunities and strategies based upon process improvements from industry benchmarks and peers. They took a deep look at the network, operating systems, servers, storage, network, server virtualization, staff support ratios, room environmentals (HVAC and safety equipment), electrical, uninterrupted power supplies (UPS), physical room security, and processes and procedures that are in place for maintaining and operating the entire enterprise infrastructure.

During the analysis phase, Excipio used the Uptime Institute tiered datacenter classifica-

tions to "grade" us. They graded us on many different aspects of the infrastructure. We received an overall score of B-. However, when compared to similar data centers our rating is closer to an A-.

Overall the study was very informative and provided a lot of information regarding our infrastructure, data centers, servers and processes.

It also identified some areas for improvement. We continue to work with our data center hosting partners and together we have made changes to processes and procedures as well as working to build a more robust, stable data center environment.

Some of improvements that are currently taking place are the installation of new uninterrupted power supplies and a larger generator at one of the data centers. Together these changes will improve the stability of our environment and help us minimize unexpected issues/outages in the future.

**Answer to Where Are We?**

**Moorhead**

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system is an Equal Opportunity employer and educator.