NEWS TICKER
iTunes U is coming to campus . . . so is Gmail, maybe, for students . . . got time for a useful summertime talk or two? . . . antivirus update . . .

Catch up on **PAGE 4**

FINE CONCEPT, LIMITED WORD
'Offering a solution' is just a down payment on making yourself understood.

Read more on **PAGE 4**

IT TIMES

Information Technology News for the UC Davis Community

Summer 2007

Talent for talking makes technician voice of IT Express

People hear of Derrik Arenal *even before they meet him. That is, they hear his voice—and like it.*

For five years, Arenal has recorded all the voice messages for IT Express, the campus tech help desk. That's not why UC Davis hired him, but he has a talent for it, backed by stints in radio, film and TV when he was growing up.

Arenal graduated from Southern Illinois University in 1999 with a degree in avionics technology. He was hired by Information and Educational Technology in 2000 as a Data Center operator and webmaster, and still works in its operations unit. His duties include overseeing operations in the center's machine room, developing and changing Web-site content, and handling service requests from system administrators and other campus clients.

His skills on the phone gained him the unofficial title of "voice of IT Express" from his previous boss, Mark Stinson, now client services manager for IET's Data Center and Client Services. Stinson tapped Arenal because callers who had talked to Arenal had liked his voice. They appreciated his messages. They praised his engaging voice and succinct delivery.

Stinson's decision wasn't the first time Arenal has been singled out for his vocal skills. When Arenal was studying at Pasadena Community College, he worked at a local radio station, KPCC. He was the show engineer for a live broadcast that profiled local events and had interviews, and often read public service announcements when the regular hosts were absent.

And he has worked in Hollywood. A Pasadena native, he was an extra in TV shows and movies, lived near the Gyllenhaals (a family with famous actors), and occasionally baby-sat Maggie Gyllenhaal (later an actress in *Mona Lisa Smile* with Julia Roberts).

Arenal also worked with Steven Gyllenhaal, Maggie's father, on a *Sesame Street* production in which Arenal was the narrator, and his younger brother Victor Arenal (now production manager for *Stunt Junkies*, a Discovery Channel show) was the co-star.

Arenal was reluctant to accept the "voice of ITX" label. "I'm a programmer," he says. "That's my title." But he is glad for the chance to *be* the voice. "It's an honor to have been selected for the job."

He is a family man at heart, happily playing tag-team with his wife, Christine, to care for their three kids. He has no plan to rekindle his show-biz past. "I'm here to serve the Davis community," he says. ■

Photo: Thao Nguyen

He did some narration for *Sesame Street*.

It's transition time:
SMARTSITE DEBUTS AS FULL-FLEDGED SYSTEM THIS FALL

SmartSite goes mainstream in three months, supercharging the possibilities for using online tech to teach and work together on campus. So if you ignored this new course-management and staff-collaboration system during its now-ending pilot phase, figuring you'd check back later—well, that moment has arrived:

• Thousands of your colleagues are using it, or at least trying it. SmartSite has attracted 8,584 unique users, mostly students and faculty so far. A year ago, at the end of SmartSite's first full quarter as a pilot, the number of users totaled just 351.

• GradeBook and the other course-management tools in MyUCDavis, used by about one-fifth of campus faculty, are going away. They have not been updated in years, and are difficult to expand. They will be replaced by the better range of tools in SmartSite starting in fall 2008.

• SmartSite continues to develop. This month SmartSite (known as CERE in the School of Veterinary Medicine) moves up to version 2.4, which will revamp the basic foundation of the system and add more features and tools, including a course-management module for handling courses with multiple sections.

• It's becoming easier to deploy. Beginning this summer, instructors, staff and students won't need approval from the program's managers to create a site. They will be able to create a site themselves by following the instructions at smartsite.ucdavis.edu.

• The support services have expanded. IET-Mediaworks now offers more than a dozen short classes per quarter on various aspects of SmartSite, and the IT Express help desk has added two SmartSite specialists. Two faculty trainers who joined the SmartSite group last winter continue to add courses on different ways to teach with and use the system.

• Every year, more students arrive on campus fluent in advanced online technology. Using SmartSite can help

Photo: Sam Woo

Roger McDonald, who uses SmartSite, teaches his "Nutrition and Aging" class.

faculty both meet students' expectations and take advantage of their skills.

All in all, SmartSite has emerged from the ground like a plant in the spring. There's more growth to come, but a year of feedback and development has earned SmartSite a serious look from all faculty and staff—not just the technologically adventuresome—as a resource that can help them work.

> "A year of feedback and development has earned SmartSite a serious look from all faculty and staff—not just the technologically adventuresome"

Engaged by the wiki

SmartSite runs on Sakai, an open-source software developed by a group of about 100 universities and similar institutions. They create products specifically useful for colleges.

SmartSite offers users two basic types of sites—for classes or for projects—plus technological tools that help faculty, staff and students share, discuss, access and organize their work. Staffers have used it to coordinate committee work, track projects, post announcements, and do similar tasks.

The most popular features so far (*see chart, inside*) include the chat, resources and class wiki tools. The chat tool supports online group discussions; the resource features are used for storing, collecting or distributing messages and documents; and the wiki is a shared online document that anyone with permission can edit.

Several instructors have told their students to use the wiki to write shared reports or journals. "The wiki is an engaging tool in a whole range of disciplines," said SmartSite program manager Kirk Alexander. "Faculty are finding they can do a lot with it."

Version 2.4 brings two major sets of improvements to the campus. It adds more choices to the menu of tools and it overhauls the underpinnings of SmartSite, improving the way it interacts with the Banner student registration system. The Tests and Quizzes feature will gain more upgrades later this year, including a better display for students.

Campus moves ahead on adding more high-tech firepower

For a campus ambitious to explore the human brain or understand the region's ecosystem more deeply, this is good news: The drive to expand the cyber-infrastructure of UC Davis is gaining traction.

A signature research project should be named soon, a group of faculty advisers is coming together to help create a campus cyber-infrastructure roadmap, and the Data Center has added enough new air conditioning to meet the growing demand for servers—the machines throw off heat like a stove—and still withstand the usually withering Davis summer.

These gains are part of the effort to identify and obtain the computing power, cooling, data storage, network speed and support that the campus needs to enable advanced research in areas ranging from medicine and science to the humanities. Those needs are collectively called cyber-infrastructure, or CI. It is as crucial to high-end research as airports are to jets, and demand is soaring as research grows more complex.

The progress follows a two-day workshop in April, where leading faculty

researchers and others talked about the state of campus CI and what to do next. The event was cosponsored by Vice Provost for Information and Educational Technology Pete Siegel and Vice Chancellor for Research Barry Klein.

Notes from the workshop have circulated among some faculty members for their comments, said Babette Schmitt, IET director for strategic planning and communications. "We're making progress," she said, "exploring the options, and taking steps to start addressing some of the needs."

Choosing a signature project will draw attention to what advanced CI can achieve here. Candidates include projects involving the Genome Center, atmospheric sciences, and several other disciplines.

The campus is also exploring the possibility of boosting the Genome Center's link to the huge, ultrafast Internet connection owned by the Corporation for Education Network Initiatives in California (CENIC). "We're working with the Genome Center to determine interest in opening the first dedicated CENIC network link for the campus,"

Schmitt said. This would be a big step forward in helping researchers send and access amazingly complex sets of data. A dedicated link would let the center avoid the interruptions natural in a shared connection.

Faculty members Louise Kellogg, Mani Tripathi, Ken Joy, Bernd Hamann, S.J. Ben Yoo, Susan Ustin, Bertram Ludaescher and Dawei Lin have volunteered for the campus CI oversight team. The group will help address needs for more CI throughout campus.

"We're doing this in partnership with the campus, including deans and the research community. The CI agencies that participated in the workshop are eager to help us too," Schmitt said. "The work has just begun. You can expect to read about more progress in the months ahead." ■

READ MORE:
Read "How much do we need?" and other archived stories on CI at technews.ucdavis. edu. For workshop presentations and follow-up materials, go to vpiet.ucdavis. edu/cyberinfrastructure.cfm.

ROGER **McDONALD**

Professor, Nutrition Department

What do you use SmartSite for?

Primarily, for my Nutrition 105 "Nutrition and Aging" class. I use the module tool to upload my lectures' outlines and link the outlines to slides used in class. The chat room is used for an online office hour. I also post online quizzes through the Quizbuilder, and the scores are downloaded directly into the GradeBook. I make extensive use of the wiki—I have my students use it to write a collaborative project on a subject concerning the biology of aging.

When did you start using it?

Kirk Alexander, SmartSite's program manager, asked me about a year and half ago to be one of the three or four faculty to beta-test the first rollout of Sakai. I built Nutrition 105 last year using Sakai with the help of the Faculty Mentoring Faculty Program.

What's your advice to new users?

Building a course site takes time. Don't let the upfront work scare you off; once the content is there, it is there forever and you will never again search around for your lecture notes, slides, or other information. Start slow and use a few simple functions first. As with any e-learning tool, content is what matters.

How do you see yourself using it in two years?

I really don't see any change in the way I use it. As new tools or revisions of the current tools roll out, I will find some use for them.

KRISTINA **deKORSAK**

Graduate Student
and Instructor, Linguistics

What do you use SmartSite for?

Mainly to increase student interaction. I recently began creating a new site for my dissertation research.

When did you start using it?

In the winter quarter of 2007.

What's your advice to new users?

Choose one goal, either for instruction or research, and use SmartSite to help you achieve it. Having a clear idea about what you want to accomplish beforehand will help guide you as you create your site. It also helps to have your own site in place if you attend the training workshop, so you can begin working on your site right away.

How do you see yourself using it in two years?

I see myself reworking my existing sites for teaching and research. My current use of SmartSite has opened my eyes to new possibilities that I would like to explore in the future.

SUSAN **KEEN**

Academic Coordinator and
Lecturer, Evolution and Ecology

SmartSite *la*

Sites help health-care students learn up and down the state

For the past year, students from the Family Nurse Practitioner/Physician Assistant Program have been using SmartSite to participate in primary care medicine classes and work with peers from Redding to San Diego. The tactic saves them a lot of car trips to Sacramento, and helps extend the School of Medicine's reach into "medically underserved" corners of the state.

The FNP/PA program teaches experienced health-care workers to become family nurse practitioners or physician assistants. The program usually takes two full-time years to complete, but it also offers continuing education classes to certified nurse practitioners.

Most of the students don't live or work in Sacramento. Using SmartSite helps them learn and stay connected, even though they come to the city only a few days each month.

The students generally "stay in their own communities, learn clinical skills from the preceptors, and spend a lot of time on SmartSite" for presentations, discussions and similar tasks, said Wen Sullivan, a computer resource specialist who helps run SmartSite sites for the program.

SmartSite helps the FNP/PA balance two aspects of its mission: to increase the availability of culturally relevant primary health care in parts of California where it's scarce, and to emphasize a team approach to delivering health care. Helping the students learn where they live increases the odds that they will stay in those areas after they graduate, Sullivan added.

The program was one of the first departments at UC Davis to use SmartSite as its primary course management system. An initial pilot with the first generation version in fall 2005 didn't work well for students or faculty, mostly due to the program's instability.

"The students and faculty were so frustrated by the bugs in the system that we moved back to WebCT [an alternative, commercial system]," Sullivan said. But a second attempt succeeded last summer because SmartSite had grown much more stable through several programming revisions, and because the project team at IET-Mediaworks was so helpful.

"SmartSite has improved tremendously since we first used it," Sullivan said.

"Like all other course management systems, there will be a learning curve for everybody involved in the process," she said. She recommends formal training from Information and Educational Technology and other information technology resources on campus for at least one support staff person and faculty member—doing that will provide local and accessible "bridge" support to other staff and faculty, and reduce the learning curve as questions arise.

"Those who have used other online course management systems will be surprised how well SmartSite works," Sullivan said, "and as a faculty or staff member, how easy it is to construct a functional course site."

Departments and staff interested in using multiple SmartSite sites to manage classes and collaborative projects of all types can arrange a demonstration for their group by emailing smartsite-help@ucdavis.edu. ■

HOW **YO**
WILL

here's what you can d

create, distribute, assign
electronic assignments

create quizzes, surveys
tests & quizzes

po

present work in sequence
modules

inform others
announcements

add users, change tools
worksite setup

post lectures
podcasting

add RSS feeds
news

organize activitie
calendar

visit **smartsite.ucdavi**

Learn more and

Faculty, students and staff can learn more abo

- ▣ Take a short workshop. For a list, go to trc.ucdavis.edu.
- ▣ Enroll in the Summer Institute for Teaching and Technology, July 16-20. Visit trc.ucdavis.edu/trc/sitt.
- ▣ Watch online videos. Visit "support and training" at smartsite.ucdavis.edu.
- ▣ Instructors can tap the Faculty Mentoring Faculty Program, which focuses on tech and education; see fmfp.ucdavis.edu.

WINTER 2006
Begins as a small pilot program

2006-2007
Unique users grow from 351 to 8,584

What do you use SmartSite for?

For two classes in fall 2006: EVE 198 (Seminar on Concept-mapping) and HNR 090X (Honors Discussion). We started using it to test the chat room tool and to try the drop box for students' assignments. We like the idea of grade deadlines and the fact that students can submit anytime.

What is your advice to new users?

Much of it is intuitive, but new users should start playing with it, then keep a list of questions and go for help once in a while. It has a lot of neat features, and the builders have tried hard to make it functional.

How do you see yourself using it in two years?

I hope to keep using the drop box and Web-site features, and to expand to some of the other features. We plan to use it with a new large-enrollment course we are offering next year.

unches this fall

U USE IT ?

o with these tools

post course outlines
syllabus

manage,* submit grades
gradebook

talk online
chat room

speak your mind
forum

edit a shared site
wiki

create group address
email archive

store materials online
resources

share documents
drop box

s.edu for more information

* will see significant improvements by first part of 2008

Sakai chair takes stock of educational tech

The words might startle, coming from a world expert in the field, but John Norman thinks "it's a noticeable weakness of educational technology" that it hasn't made a better case for itself.

That's not to say the technology isn't useful—it is, he said, particularly for long-distance learning, to make classroom instruction more engaging, for administrative convenience, in large classes, and to help students of varying skill levels come up to standard.

But there's more work to do, said Norman, director of the Centre for Applied Research in Educational Technologies and "head of e-learning" at the University of Cambridge in England. He has a background as an engineer and medical devices entrepreneur.

His comment on the image of educational technology, he said, is him "speaking from a Cambridge perspective." Norman also chairs the board of the Sakai Foundation, the international group of colleges and other institutions that created the open-source software undergirding SmartSite, UC Davis' new online course-management system. And in that role, he visited Davis one day in April.

He felt good about the competence and enthusiasm of people at UC Davis involved with SmartSite, and saw significant political and financial commitment by the campus to the program. "I'd be pretty confident you'll be successful," he said.

He is interested that UC Davis has adopted more than one version of Sakai for use here. "We've had that pressure at Cambridge," he said. UC Davis has one version of SmartSite each for the main campus, School of Veterinary Medicine (where it's known as CERE, for Collaborative Educational Research Environment), and the School of Medicine. Norman has made a mental note to see how this setup works, and whether UC Davis will conclude it was the best approach.

He also likes the SmartSite faculty-to-faculty training model, plus the student training.

As for faculty who have looked at SmartSite and decided to pass, Norman said "it's not unreasonable to ask hard questions" about how people use Sakai and what good it does them. "I'm not a technology evangelist in that sense."

Educational technology offers clear benefits for distance learning and large classes, he said. The benefits are less obvious outside those scenarios, but Cambridge has concluded that the right use of technology can:

- Enhance face-to-face instruction. For instance, an impressive digital display of large molecules, one a student could manipulate, can help the student understand the molecules better.
- Make managing a class more convenient, by creating a handy place to store papers, handle communications, and so on.
- Serve "an increasingly variable intake of students." Diagnostic systems coupled with individual self-paced learning, for example, can help students prepare for university entry and start on par with their peers.

Student expectations are also driving the spread of educational technology—and their expectations, Norman said, continue to climb. ■

CHRISTOPHER**FROH**

Lecturer in Percussion,
Music Department

What do you use SmartSite for?
I use SmartSite to post relevant materials for my Music 10 class. These include the syllabus, daily lecture schedule, announcements, audio examples and other resources including glossaries and composer biographies. The chat room is a popular function among the students (especially the night before tests and quizzes). In addition, I've used the message center function for an online writing assignment viewable to the whole class.

When did you start using it?
This is my first try.

What's your advice to new users?
Start familiarizing yourself with the system well before you think you should! It's a lot to learn, and operating certain functions was counterintuitive to me. Also, make best friends with your trainer; the tech staff is excellent and will do all they can to help you. Finally, be sure to test every function you plan to use before you enable it.

How do you see yourself using it in two years?
I'm interested in exploring the tutorial function. This would be a good resource for the students, but seems to be quite a bit of work on the front end to enable.

KENNETH**SHACKEL**
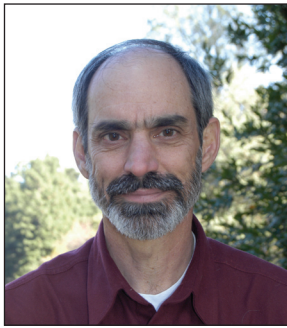
Professor, Plant Sciences

What do you use SmartSite for?
To post lectures and previous exams.

When did you start using it?
I started using SmartSite in earnest in winter 2007 for Biosciences 1C, specifically to use the quiz feature. I wanted the students to have access to online multiple-choice quizzes consisting of eight questions drawing from a large pool of questions. After finishing the quiz, the students would get a score and item-level feedback for each answer they chose. Unfortunately, the first quiz version of SmartSite was not designed to allow for practice quizzes, and I had to use an older version of the same approach.

What's your advice to new users?
Might as well start using it now!

How do you see yourself using it in two years?
For sure, the improved quiz feature will be useful as soon as it is available, and the wiki might be valuable for classes that involve collaborative writing.

get started . . .

out SmartSite in several ways. Options include:

- For help setting up a SmartSite account, or to answer questions about its tools, contact IT Express (itexpress.ucdavis.edu) at (530) 754-HELP or smartsite-help@ucdavis.edu.
- Instructors can get one-on-one consults from trained student tech advisers. Contact ET Partners (etpartners.ucdavis.edu) at (530) 754-2115 or etpartners@ucdavis.edu.
- Go to smartsite.ucdavis.edu, start looking around, and apply for a site.

FALL 2007
SmartSite launches as the preferred collaboration and course-management system

2008-2009
Campus retires course management tools in MyUCDavis

Comes of Age (from page 1)

GradeBook, the grading tool, is also getting better, particularly in "categories and weighting." That's the ability to group graded items into categories, and then automatically calculate a final score based on a weighted combination of the scores from different items and categories, for each student in a class—regardless of how many tests, exams and other kinds of graded projects an instructor might require. GradeBook cannot do all of this yet, but Alexander expects it to gain this capability by winter quarter 2008.

Sakai will evolve, adding tools and refining the system to keep pace with the changing needs of instructors. (New tools

the campus can consider include Gallery, which lets users select a collection of images and view them in a specific order; and ImageQuiz, which an instructor uses to quiz students on their knowledge related to a position within an image, such as, "Where on this map would you find Mrak Hall?")

Committees are using SmartSite to share working documents, Alexander said, and departmental tech support teams are using it to help each other support their clients. The campus SmartSite group, he added, will keep exploring ways to reach faculty, and to make SmartSite pedagogically interesting.

SmartSite is useful for everyday tasks, said Andy Jones, a key faculty adviser to Mediaworks and a lecturer in the University Writing Program. But SmartSite's virtual loca-

tions and organizing structures, he said, also "encourage faculty to consider their teaching and research tasks more thoughtfully, deeply and purposefully."

"A new phase is about to begin for UC Davis," IET Vice Provost Pete Siegel wrote in a campus letter about SmartSite in May, "a phase that encourages new forms of communication, learning, collaboration and community building."

"Join us," he wrote, "and experience it for yourself." ■

READ MORE:
*For more information, plus more user profiles,
go to smartsite.ucdavis.edu.*

CAMPUS TECH*Wrapup*

NEW STADIUM GETS HIGH-TECH DISPLAY

Aggies who visit the new campus stadium will see a scoreboard with some pretty advanced technology.

The new home of UC Davis football features a high-definition video screen about 19 feet high and 24 feet long. It was made by Daktronics Inc., the South Dakota company that also installed the big electronic signs in the Rec Hall. The stadium sign can handle live broadcasts, instant replays, graphic overlays, and public service announcements during games and events.

IET-Mediaworks/Classroom Technology Services lent a hand with this UC Davis Athletics project. As the in-house production company, Mediaworks will run the video screen for all home football games. Also, the broadcast cables that snaked across Toomey Field won't clutter the ground here; Mediaworks will link its TV truck to a parking-lot pedestal that has underground cables connecting to about 10 locations in the stadium. (Other broadcast crews can also use the pedestal, but only Mediaworks' crew will send video to the screen.)

Photo: Jim von Rummelhoff

In the planning phase, Alex Antipa, a TV tech for Mediaworks, helped prepare for the broadcast service by staking out areas for TV trucks, equipment, and other needs. Aggie Stadium officially opens in September, although the women's lacrosse team has already played on the field.

ELLUMINATE/CONNECT PRO DECISION DUE

IET-Mediaworks/Classroom Technology Services has finished its review of Elluminate and Acrobat Connect Professional (formerly Breeze Meeting), two software products that help people meet and work together online. It isn't ready yet to endorse one or the other for broader campus use.

Mediaworks has run pilot tryouts with faculty for both programs during the past year. "The evaluation is complete, and it is going to two committees for input and ratification involving faculty," said Liz Gibson, Mediaworks/CTS director, in May. "We will discuss our thoughts on a recommendation to the campus, and obtain their feedback. When that is complete, we will have an announcement for the campus," perhaps as soon as June.

The two committees are the Technology Infrastructure Forum and the educational technology subcommittee of the Campus Council for Information Technology.

"Online communications and collaboration tools can be used for many different purposes," Gibson said, in the areas of instruction, research, outreach and general business meetings—allowing users to watch presentations, share software applications, or do similar tasks, without having to travel. Find more information at iet.ucdavis.edu/teaching/commtool.cfm.

SUMMER TECH/TEACHING INSTITUTE

There's still time to register for the Summer Institute on Teaching and Technology, a week of talks, seminars and workshops July 16-20 on campus. Topics last year ranged from podcasting and the use of tech in big lecture classes to ideas on student writing and an introduction to SmartSite. The institute is run by the Teaching Resources Center. Read more or register at trc.ucdavis.edu/trc/sitt.

CCFIT YEARLY REPORT COMING SOON . . .

The Campus Council for Information Technology will soon produce its annual report—a summary of what it did over the past year, plus recommendations on various issues going forward. It's a central source of data and perspectives on major trends in local campus tech.

The group (CCFIT) advises Provost Virginia Hinshaw and Vice Provost for Information and Educational Technology Pete Siegel on educational and information technology, and on its use to assist teaching, research, administration and public service. Its 38 members represent interests ranging from students, staff employees and the Academic Senate to IET, various administrative offices and academic disciplines, and the Health System. Find the report, due mid-June, at ccfit.ucdavis.edu.

GMAIL PILOT FOR STUDENTS THIS FALL?

The campus is looking at contracting out some of its campus email services to either Microsoft or Google. Information and Educational Technology is exploring whether or not the campus should try Google's service, Gmail Apps for Education, in a fall pilot program.

As the campus grows in size and technological sophistication, it has become more challenging for Geckomail, the campus email system, to meet users' needs. Working with Microsoft or Google would let UC Davis redirect more of its resources into upgrading other critical information technology programs while improving email services for students.

Both companies have expansive email systems, and work hard to keep them competitive. Their size helps them offer higher storage volumes and richer features than are available through Geckomail. Also, about 3,100 campus email users already redirect their campus email to Gmail, Hotmail or similar free systems—that's less than 5 percent of the 64,000 total UCD email accounts, but the number is growing.

In March, the campus surveyed students on potential email changes. Concerns centered on storage, keeping their "@ucdavis.edu" email tag with lifetime access, plus virus protection and spam filtering. In April, representatives from Microsoft and Google discussed their services with about a dozen students in an information session on campus.

Based on the survey and the session, students lean toward Gmail. IET will continue to consult students, faculty, and staff as it moves toward a final decision on a tryout. Find updates online at TechNews or vpiet.ucdavis.edu/student.email.cfm.

HEAR IT SECURITY EXPERT THIS MONTH

The three-day 2007 UC Davis IT Security Symposium starts June 20. Registration has closed, but people who haven't registered can still listen to the keynote speech by proxy firewall inventor Marcus Ranum. See itsecuritysymposium.ucdavis.edu/index.cfm.

CAMPUS TO OFFER PODCASTS VIA ITUNES U

An agreement between the University of California and Apple Inc. has opened the way for UC campuses to offer podcasts of campus speeches and similar public events through iTunes U. At UC Davis, details about when and how are still being worked out.

iTunes U is a service for colleges and universities that helps them offer listeners easy, constant access to campus-related podcasts, such as distinguished speaker series, course lectures and interviews. The files can be audio or video. The service works much like iTunes, Apple's popular download service that sells songs for 99 cents each, but iTunes U downloads are free.

The campus provides the people and equipment to produce the podcasts. Apple provides software and the servers to store and deliver them.

The UC Office of the President reached an agreement with Apple this spring that lets each campus in the system use iTunes U. Existing clients in Northern California include Stanford University and UC Berkeley.

"It has great potential," said Lisa Lapin, assistant vice chancellor for UC Davis' University Communications. "We still have some questions about workload and how to make it work. We're going to be looking at it over the summer."

The campus already offers a podcasting service (podcast.ucdavis.edu) through IET-Mediaworks/Classroom Technology Services that helps instructors record and post lectures. Forty-five classes offered podcast lectures last winter quarter. Present plans call for UC Davis to use iTunes U for recordings intended for a public audience, said Liz Gibson, director of Mediaworks/CTS. "Our current in-house podcasting system will continue to be used for instructional purposes."

REMOVE SYMANTEC ANTIVIRUS

The campus contract with Symantec AntiVirus expires July 24. All students, staff, faculty and departments who obtained it through UC Davis should remove it by then. As a replacement, the campus has signed a five-year contract for antivirus software from Sophos. Sophos protects laptops, desktops, handheld devices, and servers. Information and Educational Technology is paying the cost, so Sophos is free to all students, staff, and faculty not affiliated with the UC Davis Health System. (The Health System buys antivirus software from McAfee.)

For help uninstalling Symantec and downloading Sophos, visit my.ucdavis.edu/software.

IET SUPPORT FOR VISTA STARTS JULY 1

On July 1, Information and Educational Technology will begin supporting Vista, Microsoft's new operating system. That doesn't mean you should immediately upgrade; your decision depends on whether your system's hardware configurations, and the software you use, work with Vista.

If you're a student buying a new PC, buy one with Vista Home Premium or better. But Vista is not required, so if you already own a PC without Vista, it is OK if it meets campus requirements. Campus hardware specifications have been upgraded with Vista in mind: for recommended system requirements, see computerownership.ucdavis.edu.

If you're staff or faculty, ask your technical support staff for guidance regardless of whether you're buying a new PC or upgrading your current machine. If departments upgrade, they should buy Vista Business or better.

Volunteers from 15 departments began testing Vista last December to make sure it would work with important campus applications. Read more at vista.ucdavis.edu.

For real solutions, don't use that blurry word

by Bill Buchanan

Some bright co-workers will look at me suspiciously after they read this, but I bear their raised eyebrows for the sake of the common campus welfare to offer this advice:

Beware of the word "solutions." The word seems innocent and flexible, but it's often baffling, and typical of the stunted comprehension that jargon creates. Try not to use it. Or if you do, be sure to explain what you mean.

You've seen it happen. A service or a procedure is sometimes called a solution. The word sounds helpful because it focuses on the outcome, and focusing on the outcome sounds open and positive. You have a problem, and someone has the solution.

The problem is, "solution" provides only a partial definition. It's merely a down payment on communication. Just what kind of solution are we talking about? The range of possible answers is pretty big.

If I'm out here on Chiles Road and need to get to the Silo in 15 minutes, I won't be all that satisfied if someone offers a "solution for my mobility challenge." I would need more details. Are they advising me to run? Offering a ride? Tossing me the keys to a 1992 Ford? Is there an "A" parking permit on that Ford? Is the Ford really a Lamborghini?

Obviously, that's an exaggeration. But the point is, details matter, and "solution" by itself doesn't convey details. It says something will work. It doesn't say how.

If a friend strolled by your desk around noon and offered you a hunger solution, you'd probably ask, "You mean lunch?" If he didn't know—if he answered, well, "I *could* be offering a sandwich, or maybe an IV hookup, or perhaps an appetite suppressant"—you'd think, "Hmm, this needs to get a little more specific."

Obviously, another exaggeration, but technically, each of the choices is a solution. That's how distended the word is.

I'm not writing just to complain, so here's my suggested alternative:

When you're tempted to use the word, identify and explain what kind of solution you're offering. A new program? An improved procedure? A different way of organizing the work?

Then talk about that program, procedure or new way of working. Tell your listener some of the important, defining details. Get specific, and unless you're talking in a very broad sense, downplay the word "solution."

On its own, it just doesn't say enough.

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