

# TECHNOLOGY TODAY

## New Initiatives Supporting Academia

We welcome your comments and ideas for new initiatives at [cisfeedback@cuny.edu](mailto:cisfeedback@cuny.edu)

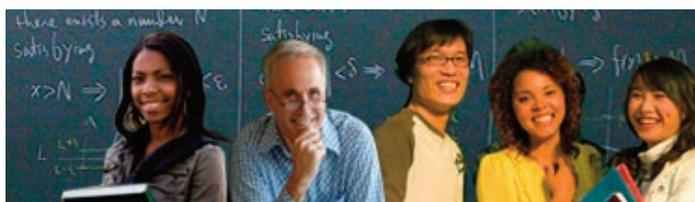
- BLACKBOARD ENHANCEMENT
- BLACKBOARD ENHANCEMENT SURVEY
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CUNY CIS continues to undertake numerous projects to support the University's faculty and students. The following provides updates on new, significant technology initiatives supporting academia.

### Blackboard Enhancement

**Blackboard Enhanced!** Blackboard underwent a significant enhancement at the end of December with the upgrade of the CUNY Blackboard environment from version 9.1 Service Pack 7 to version 9.1 Service Pack 13. The upgrade enables CUNY to keep pace with Blackboard Inc.'s evolution of its Learning Management System and benefit from several new features and functionality enhancements, including an enhanced navigation system for courses and functions, test and assessment enhancements, new inline grading functions that simplify giving feedback to students, a new calendar tool that allows users to export their calendar entries to Outlook and Google, and an improved content editor.

The upgrade installation took place from December 26-28, 2013, and the new version went live on December 28th. As with previous Blackboard upgrades, the enhancement was overseen by a Steering Committee comprised of Blackboard administrators and faculty from many campuses, in partnership with the CIS Project Management Office and CIS Application Support team. Additionally, task forces for testing, communication, and training were drawn from the Blackboard Subcommittee of the Committee on Academic Technology and the Blackboard Management Council. User acceptance testing and initial Train-the-Trainer sessions were held in October, and a major revamp of the CUNY Blackboard Resources website ([www.cuny.edu/blackboard](http://www.cuny.edu/blackboard)) took place in December.



Faculty can learn about the new features of the Blackboard upgrade in several ways: the CUNY Blackboard Resources site, which contains user guides and short video tutorials; Blackboard's website at [https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1\\_SP\\_12\\_and\\_SP\\_13/Instructor/000\\_Product\\_Updates](https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1_SP_12_and_SP_13/Instructor/000_Product_Updates) or by contacting your Blackboard System Administrator on your campus.

### Blackboard Enhancement Survey

We wanted to hear how you felt about the Blackboard enhancements and the upgrade process. A tab on the Blackboard homepage linked to a brief, anonymous survey to obtain your feedback on the Blackboard upgrade, the new features, and the process. This survey was up for most schools from February 25 – March 21, 2014, and from March 21, 2014 – April 7, 2014 for the 3 community colleges on a different calendar.



We received more than 25,000 responses to the survey, with more than 1,100 of these from faculty members. Nearly 70% of faculty responding said that their "level of satisfaction with the overall experience of the Blackboard upgrade" was a 4 or 5 (with 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest). More than 80% of students responding gave it a 4 or 5. A full report on the Blackboard survey will soon be available and will be posted on the Blackboard Resources website at [www.cuny.edu/blackboard](http://www.cuny.edu/blackboard) and on the CIS webpage at <http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/CIS.html>

### Upgrade to Library System

CUNY is undergoing an upgrade in its library system to Aleph version 21. The new version provides multiple enhancements: it will be easier for users and library staff to search for resources in the Library Catalog; item availability will be updated more quickly, allowing users to find out if a book or resource is available; and it will provide a secure and better integrated authentication process for logging in with patron accounts. Installation of the application has already occurred; testing and data conversion is now under way. The cutover to the version will take place this summer.

The upgrade to Aleph will set the stage for CIS to work with Library staff to plan and complete work needed before Primo can become enabled. Primo will be a search tool that will enable, through a single query, a search across the all databases in CUNY as well as global and regional resources from the Primo Central index.

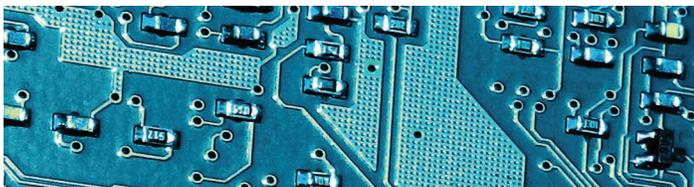
## StudioAbroad

CUNY has purchased software to help the University keep tabs on those studying or traveling abroad so they can be contacted in the event of an emergency. The software, called StudioAbroad, gives the university 24-7 web access to student data that participants must provide to program administrators. In the event of an emergency, personnel will be able to access this data to contact students. For example, it will allow CUNY to quickly identify and reach students in countries that just experienced a natural disaster, such as an earthquake. CUNY will also have the ability to track students based upon college, geographical area or study abroad program. In addition, the software provides administrators with analytics on study abroad programs so they may best determine where to focus resources.



Currently, the software is in production and accessible by campus administrators at [travelregistry.cuny.edu](http://travelregistry.cuny.edu). CUNY is working with the vendor and campuses to import student information into the system as well as to upgrade to the latest version of the software. If you are planning to travel abroad, or are arranging a study abroad program, please contact your campus study abroad office about this tool.

## Network Upgrades



CUNY has continued to make upgrades to the University's network to improve speeds connecting to the Internet and Blackboard. In Fall 2013, one of the two CUNY-wide Internet links was upgraded from 2 gbps to 5 gbps. In addition, a 1 gbps circuit was installed to connect to the new CUNY Disaster Recovery site. This work built upon earlier improvements to the network in 2013, including the addition of the Bronx Community College and Hostos Community College to the fiber network at the end of Spring 2013 at 20 gbps for both campuses, as well as an upgrade in the link to Queens College and the NYC College of Technology to 1 gbps in June 2013, and a similar upgrade to the link to York College in July.

In early 2014, CIS also upgraded the second CUNY-wide Internet link from 2 gbps to 5 gbps and the link to the College of Staten Island from 1 gbps to 10 gbps, which enhances access to the High Performance Computing Center at CSI

## CUNY IT Conference



The 12th Annual CUNY IT Conference was held at John Jay College on December 4 and 5, 2013. The two day conference had a record number of 1,117 people attending, with nearly 60 panels featuring faculty, IT staff, project managers, and vendors. While the panel topics ranged greatly, many focused on the impact of the cloud, big data, mobile learning and social networking.

The conference featured two keynoters: Candace Thrille of Stanford University, who founded and was until very recently the director of the Open Learning Initiative at Carnegie Mellon University, and Kenneth C. Green, Funding Director of the Campus Computing Project who was also the keynote at the 2nd conference and returned to give an update on uses of technology in higher education.



For the first time, the IT Conference also held a CUNY Excellence in Technology Awards ceremony to recognize outstanding individuals in IT. An Excellence in Service Award was presented to an outstanding IT staff person at every campus. In addition, the following competitive awards were presented to teams at the following colleges: the Award for Innovation was presented to a team at John Jay College; the Award for an Outstanding Project Serving Students, Faculty and/or Staff was presented to a team at Bronx Community College; and the CUNY-wide Collaboration Award was presented to a team at College of Staten Island and faculty members of CSI, CCNY and Hunter.

## CUNYfirst Wave 4

**CUNYfirst** In early April, CUNYfirst rolled out Student Administrative tools (Campus Solutions) to the fourth set of colleges. The addition of

Baruch College, City College, John Jay College of Criminal Justice and Medgar Evers College means that 19 colleges and more than 260,000 students are now using the Campus Solutions tools.

Each of these Wave 4 colleges recruited key faculty members and faculty from other CUNY colleges who have used the system for class administration, grading and advisement, to assist with the transition.

Among CUNYfirst overall improvements, we have implemented a process for faculty who keep final grades on a spreadsheet to upload those grades directly into CUNYfirst. We are also responding to other requests to make the faculty experience easier. The final colleges that will add Campus Solutions in 2015 are the CUNY Graduate Center, CUNY BA, the Graduate School of Journalism, Macaulay Honors College, and the School of Professional Studies.

## CUNY Site Licenses



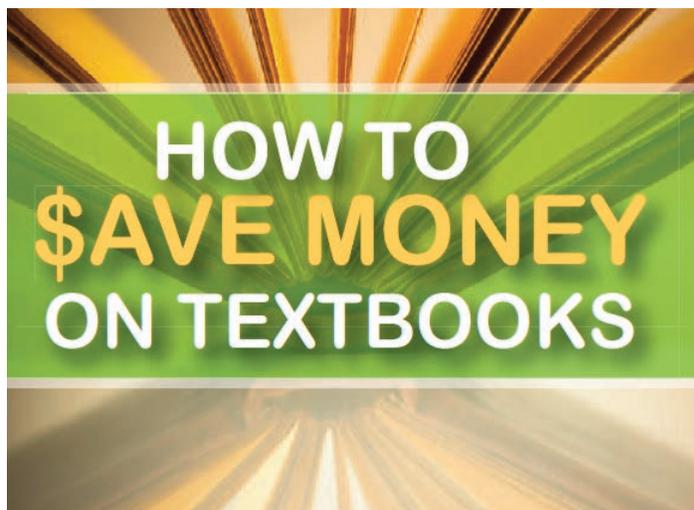
Don't forget that CUNY CIS purchases many software licenses for use by students, faculty and staff at all colleges, resulting in significant discounts for the colleges. Software options vary from the Adobe Creative Suite (dedicated to graphic design and video editing), to Gaussian (software that addresses specific areas such as electronic structure modeling), and many more topics of interest to the academic community. Additionally, products such as Microsoft Office can be found on the CUNY eMail on the Citizen CUNY portal.

You can find information on CUNY site licenses at under "Software and Vendor Information" at <http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/CIS/tech-services/site-licenses.html>. This site contains a clear presentation of appropriate use and availability. Most of the software listed can be used by CUNY students, faculty, and staff both at University facilities and at home. The chart in the "Software and Vendors Information" Section delineates any exceptions.

On this site, you will find the "Coordinator Contact Information" list for your school or unit. To request software and/or further information, please e-mail the appropriate coordinator.

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## Textbook Savings Initiative



Soaring textbook prices is one of the major concerns for CUNY students and faculty, and often a reason students do not purchase the required textbook materials. In an effort to counter this trend, CUNY has convened a committee to examine different options for lowering textbook costs for students. The committee -- composed of faculty, administrators, student representatives from various campuses, as well as the University Chief Information Officer, the Deputy Chief Operating Officers, and the University Librarian -- recently issued a Request for Information to better understand the changing textbook marketplace and determine the best options for CUNY. Twenty responded to the RFI, including open source content providers, publishers, and providers of online marketplaces. Since then, John Jay has released an RFP for a virtual bookstore to provide textbooks and other course materials at the lowest possible cost. Proposals were due on April 11, 2014.

## Microsoft IT Academy

CUNY CIS now has a University-wide license to extend the Microsoft IT Academy to all students, faculty and staff on all campuses. Beginning in Fall 2014, everyone will have access to the official curriculum and content for all Microsoft products, including the option to purchase certification vouchers for the actual tests. The membership was included with the main campus renewal.



Starting in Fall 2014, each college will be able to use the Microsoft IT Academy to train its staff and faculty. It will also enable colleges to provide Microsoft Certifications for students as colleges now have the option to purchase and manage certification voucher packs. These certifications should give students a leg up as they seek to enhance skills and ready themselves for the workplace. Finally, the expanded license will allow the campuses to offer MS certified training through their continuing education offices as well.