UNITING THE PEOPLESOFT PIECES WITH myPugetSound
by Vikram Nilakantan ’14

A
s we near completion of the university’s transition to PeopleSoft, it’s time for us to make the best of all our new system has to offer. We now have the core pillars of PeopleSoft Financials, Human Resources, and Campus Solutions in place as the backbone for Puget Sound’s internal processes, and various enhancements are being made to address some of our community’s specific needs (see page 3). This has all happened in a very short timeframe, and it’s important to remember that just getting the PeopleSoft framework up and running—with functionality that touches every user and extends into every department on campus—is an impressive feat.

The next step toward making PeopleSoft our own is to enhance the user interface, creating an online environment with easier navigation and a streamlined design in accordance with the university’s recent rebranding. Technology Services is working closely with students, faculty, and staff to create an experience that improves the usability of PeopleSoft while supporting day-to-day productivity. Called myPugetSound, this application will centralize PeopleSoft for every user on campus, requiring just a single signon to access the entire system.

Work is underway with the initial rollout of myPugetSound scheduled to take place by the start of fall semester. Once fully implemented, it will provide easy access to elements of Campus Solutions, Human Resources, Financials, and other online resources. Additionally, myPugetSound will include a feature called “My Page” in which users can pick and choose from tasks to create a personalized work environment. For example, students will be able to set “My Page” to include both class schedule and timesheet, two items commonly used by students who also work on campus.

There is no doubt that, as happens in any major transition, the initial phase of implementation over the past two years has not been easy and has, in fact, tested our collective patience from time to time. By harnessing the best features of our new framework to create an improved user experience, myPugetSound offers hope for a brighter future for PeopleSoft at Puget Sound.

Vikram Nilakantan is former Director of Technology Services for ASUPS and a member of the Portal Advisory Group working with Technology Services (TS) to guide the implementation of myPugetSound. After graduation, Vikram will join the TS staff as Web and Database Developer and will play a key role in the ongoing development of myPugetSound.

MOVING OFFICES?
CALL TECHNOLOGY SERVICES!
If you’re moving to a new workspace on campus, we need to know so we can assist with the proper relocation of all your office technology.

We’ll make sure your computer is correctly connected and set up, and we’ll relocate and reconfigure your office phone. Because university phones use Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), you can’t just move them yourself. VoIP phones are connected and powered through the network to report voicemail and 911 calls with your name, building, and room number. In case of emergency, that information must be accurate. Plus, we want your phone to work right!

So, if you’re planning to move offices, please contact the Technology Service Desk at 253.879.8585 or servicedesk@pugetsound.edu. And, while you’re at it, please let Human Resources know your new location so they can update your information in university records!
OPEN SOURCE IN THE ACADEMY

By Cindy Riche, Deputy CIO for Client Support and Educational Technology Services

Open source textbooks and software and journals! Oh my! Like Dorothy in Oz, new arrivals to campuses around the world are stepping into a Technicolor landscape filled with new forms of information creation and sharing. Such changes are being wrought not by a Kansas tornado but rather by the substantial influence of the open source movement.

The open source movement has developed in part as a reaction to increasingly restrictive publishing and pricing structures that govern legal distribution of intellectual property in the United States and around the world. Authors of textbooks and journal articles and developers of software are responding by making their works available at no cost and with varying restrictions on attribution and modification.

A range of distribution venues has arisen for open source electronic access to books, articles, and software (see box, Curious About Open Source?). In some cases, consortiums have formed to offer collections; in others, individual authors have created their own websites to distribute their works.

Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science Rob Beezer was an early and passionate proponent of open source textbooks and has come to be a widely recognized advocate for all things open source.

Beezer has presented numerous sessions to a wide range of academic audiences around the U.S. and in Canada, South Korea, and South Africa on topics such as “Leading from the Back: Open Source Software Development,” “A How-To on Producing and Promoting an Open Source Textbook for Mathematics,” and “Open Textbooks: An Author’s Perspective.”

Beezer has written and published his own open source textbook, A First Course in Linear Algebra, which he makes available at no cost on the book’s website. He is also currently working on two additional open source books, as well as a third book which will be a “non-profit” venture with traditional copyright and publisher but then will go to “open access” after 12 months.

In addition to his presentations and writings, Professor Beezer has contributed to and championed the use of Sage, an open source mathematics software program he utilizes in his courses. With Sang-Gu Lee, he co-authored Calculus, a book which features Sage and is geared to the South Korean academic market.

“I’ve long been an advocate of the open source textbook model,” Beezer states. “It makes so much more sense than the traditional textbook sourcing system. With open source, authors can make updates at any time and can invite other authors to add or modify the material.”

Beezer has, in fact, invited his readers to “donate” changes to the text, which may then be incorporated into his version. As he puts it, this ongoing editing model “makes the textbook more responsive to student feedback or developments in the field and means it can be improved for every new class.”

Beezer also points to an added benefit for students during these times of rising educational costs, noting that “Students like saving money with the no-cost option of using the textbook online.”

Beezer has utilized the ongoing editing possibilities inherent in open source textbooks to great effect in the classroom.

“I offer my students rewards if they can find a mathematically significant typo in the text and several of them take up the challenge, comb through the book, and excitedly offer edits!” he reports with a laugh. “This level of engagement with the textbook is rare with printed, static books.”

CURIOUS ABOUT OPEN SOURCE?

Professor Beezer’s book is available at linear.ups.edu/html/fcla.html.

SAGE mathematics software can be downloaded from sagemath.org.

Visit Open Source Alternative at opensourcealternative.org and look under the “Alternatives” tab for open source options for many software applications.

The Open Source Initiative provides information about the open source community at opensource.org.
SFS GOES LIVE WITH NEW PAYMENT PORTAL

Student Financial Services (SFS) was in the thick of it when the university went live with the Campus Solutions pillar of PeopleSoft in Spring 2013. Not only did they have to prepare for summer billing, they had to navigate some major operational changes triggered by the transition from Cascade to PeopleSoft.

“What the SFS team has accomplished in the past year has been awesome,” states Vice President for Enrollment Jenny Rickard. “Not only did they successfully conduct a multifaceted major software implementation, they also continued to provide their hallmark exceptional service to our students, families, and Puget Sound colleagues at the same time. And they’ve done so with professionalism, skill, grace, and humor.”

The move to PeopleSoft gave SFS the opportunity to provide a better experience for Puget Sound students and parents by taking advantage of significant advancements made in recent years in third party student financial systems. The team began looking at vendors who specialize in comprehensive billing and payment portals for student accounts and, after a thorough analysis, opted to go with TouchNet Information Systems, Inc.

“TouchNet has a very strong reputation with PeopleSoft schools,” notes Maggie Mittuch, Associate Vice President for Student Financial Services. “What really appealed to me in their initial presentation was that payment plans can continue to belong to the school. We’ve always maintained our payment plans in house. Many institutions have those outsourced and students pay vendors who collect fees on them. When somebody else is managing that, you lose an important aspect of serving students, of being able to answer questions and know what’s going on.”

SFS began work last fall on the transition to TouchNet, with initial go-live this May in preparation for student billing in the summer.

“Students will have a link in our PeopleSoft system that takes them to TouchNet for bill and payment,” says SFS Functional Analyst Ava Brock. “There they’ll be able to see what they owe, estimated financial aid, payment plan options, and account history. They can authorize bill payers, which will generate an email from TouchNet to the bill payer with a password and link to the payment portal.”

Brock notes parents can choose to authorize automatic payments on a recurring schedule if they don’t want to return to TouchNet every month.

“We’ll also have the ability to process refunds via ACH,” reports Mittuch. “Since we’ll no longer have to write checks, we’ll be able to push refunds out in just 1 to 2 days which is much faster than anything we could do before.”

“We anticipate a huge time savings, not only for us, but for students in their ability to receive funding quickly and do what they need to do all in one place,” Brock states.

For more information, contact Student Financial Services at 253.879.3214 or sfs@pugetsound.edu.

MAXIMIZE PUGET SOUND KEEPS MOVING FORWARD

by Travis Nation, Deputy CIO for Enterprise Services

As detailed by Vikram Nilakantan on page 1, the rollout this fall of myPugetSound, our new portal, promises to greatly enhance the usability of our PeopleSoft system. Beyond that, though, Technology Services is working with functional offices across campus to identify and pursue various options for improving and adding needed functions.

In recent months, we’ve been able to implement such tools as printer-friendly class rosters, the ability to see all sections when searching for classes, and the new My Advisees Hub where advisors can see advisee information (major, minor, GPA, etc.) in one place. Other improvements on the way include:

• A page where chairs and administrative assistants can see all students in the department
• Additional features in My Advisees Hub
• Student alerts and person information

• Preferred name in Student Center, Faculty Center, and class search
• Improved waitlist swap process for registration
• A transcript based on the model previously available in Cascade
• Ability for students to change their major/minor and select advisor
• A page for Career and Employment Services staff to quickly assist students seeking work-study employment
• Improved Human Resources recruiting functionality for search committees

The Office of Admission continues to make great strides toward moving the university’s admission process into PeopleSoft. Go-live is scheduled for November, just in time for the class of 2019’s early decision process.

See the Project Management Office section of the Technology Services website at pugetsound.edu/pmo for details on these and other efforts.
NEW LIBRARY SYSTEM LAUNCHES IN JUNE
by Wade Guidry, Library Applications Administrator

June marks the launch of a new, improved library services platform for Collins Memorial Library. The launch is part of a broader effort among 37 academic libraries in the Pacific Northwest to migrate to a single shared, integrated library system.

The new system touches all aspects of library service. “Primo Search” will provide a single, unified replacement for Puget Sound WorldCat, SUMMIT, Journal Locator, and Collins Catalog. The back office component, “Alma,” will replace a 20-year-old system used by library staff for cataloging, acquisitions, electronic resource management, and circulation.

A preview of Primo Search will be available to campus users in May. The exact dates in June for the cutover to the new system will be announced once the schedule is finalized. The cutover will affect library services for 2 to 3 days.

Library platforms not impacted by this transition include ILLiad, Library Guides, EZProxy, Sound Ideas, and ARTstor.

MUSING ABOUT BLOGS
by William Morse, Chief Information Officer and Associate Vice President for Technology Services

Blogs. We have all heard the word. If you have surfed the web for even the briefest periods of time, you may have landed on one. Indeed, you may have gone through a whole collection of blogs and not even realized it. Yet, what exactly is this thing we call a blog?

According to Wikipedia, a “blog (a truncation of the expression web log) is a discussion or informational site published on the World Wide Web and consisting of discrete entries (‘posts’) typically displayed in reverse chronological order (the most recent post appears first).”

Originally, this tool was used by many as their own personal diary, a place to share their innermost thoughts. Early social media sites like LiveJournal paved the way by providing easy-to-use tools that almost anyone could access.

Over time, people began to develop blogs that covered a wide variety of hobbies, topics, or special interests. You can find blogs on everything from gardening to video games, cooking to car maintenance. These days, there is literally nothing that isn’t blogged about by someone. In many cases, there may be dozens, if not hundreds, of sites covering similar topics.

Yet the reach of the blog does not end there. Over time, new “virtual” magazines have developed around collections of blogs. Sites like the Huffington Post or Ars Technica now proliferate the web. These sites collect similar blogs together and make it easy for someone to find exactly what they are looking for without resorting to Google.

However, blogs don’t have to be something tailored for the entire World Wide Web to see. There are many local blogs here at Puget Sound, for example, that give our community just the information they need. Collins Memorial Library hosts a number of these as does Technology Services itself. It is a great way to reach out to those we serve.

Just recently, I started my own blog, Morse Musing. This blog is meant to cover all manner of topics surrounding the world of information technology (IT). The latest topic I am looking into is Big Data. It sounds scary, but the application of this tool in higher education could be revolutionary. Past topics include change management and just what makes working in IT so much fun... and challenging.

If you have a moment, check it out at blogs.pugetsound.edu/morse-musing/. And think about starting your own blog. These days, it is as easy as point, click, and go!

STAY INFORMED WITH TECHNOLOGY SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Do you want to stay informed of issues, outages, and scheduled maintenance on the university’s technology systems? An easy way to do so is to visit the Technology Services website at pugetsound.edu/ts and select Service Announcements from the main menu. There you can bookmark the page or subscribe to receive new and updated announcements through email or a site or browser that reads RSS feeds.

For assistance, please contact the fine folks (shown left) at the Technology Service Desk at 253.879.8585 or servicedesk@pugetsound.edu.

The Client Support Team: (left to right) Amanda Hoover, Dale Mickel, Joel Arakaki, Taryn Cramer, David Bilbrey, and Jessica Hartenstine.