

## How & Why Good FAQs Can Improve Technical Support

By John Fritz, Asst. VP, Instructional Technology & New Media

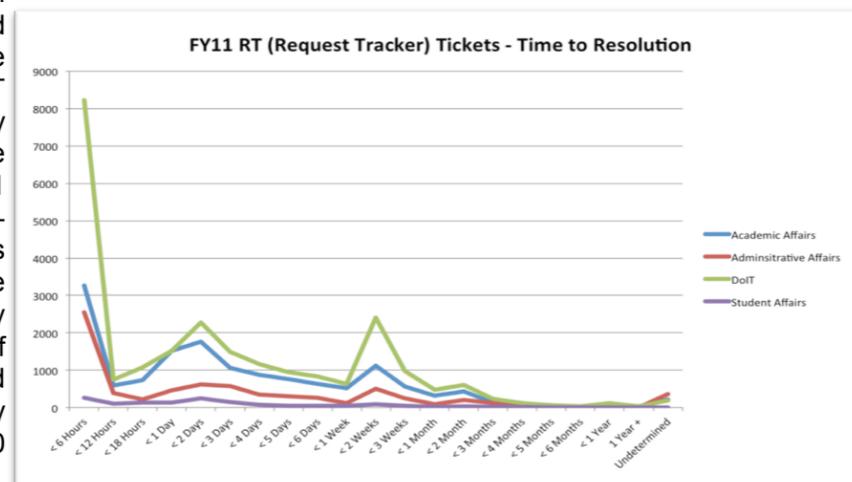
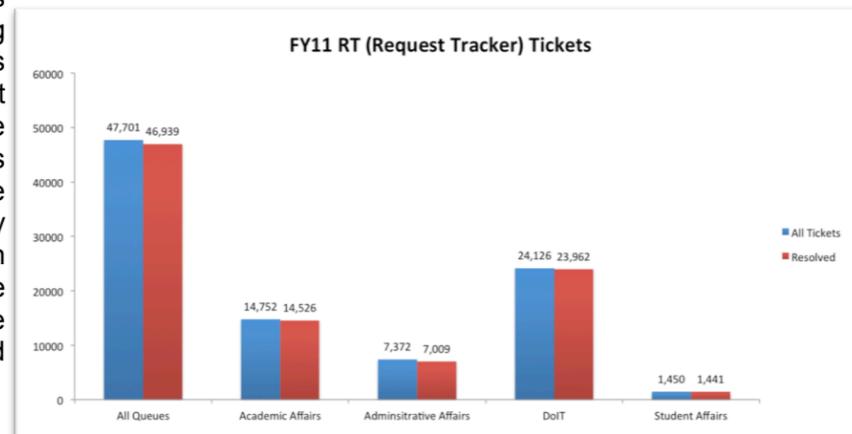
In FY11, it's fair to say the entire campus discovered the RT (Request Tracker) ticketing system, as nearly half (23,574) of all tickets (47,701) came outside of DoIT. The good news is just over 98 percent of all tickets were resolved (762 tickets are new, open, or stalled). However, one challenge is managing the growing demand for support across all divisions, particularly the time, effort, and human resources it takes to resolve tickets.

For example, 47 percent of all tickets were resolved within 1 day of being created; 30 percent in less than 6 hours (in DoIT, the average was 37 percent and 34 percent, respectively). To be sure, all users (and campus divisions that support them) would like to improve the chances of resolving issues in a day or less. But in tight budget times with hiring freezes, where do we find the capability or capacity to streamline existing systems that require dedicated staff support?

Perhaps the *myUMBC* Help menu can be a gauge to understanding and improving overall support. In FY11, the "Request Help" link to submit an RT ticket was accessed 30,000 times. By contrast, the "Find Help - FAQ" article was accessed 3,000 times (a 10 to 1 ratio of assisted support vs. self-support). These aren't exact measures of overall support, but they're close if we assume that the DoIT Help Desk may have processed 10,000 tickets on behalf of students, faculty and staff who called to report a problem; other offices may have accounted for the remaining 7,000 tickets doing the same.

For this reason, we've been working to improve the "Find Help - FAQs," including adding many "show me" videos for common tasks, and pruning out dead wood that never gets touched. As more people use the FAQs (to either solve problems directly or suggest changes to existing articles that would do so), then the average time to resolution might improve and support staff could be focused on more complex problems that lead to lost productivity among students, faculty and staff. To learn more, see the "How to Find Help" video tour on the *myUMBC* Help menu.

Toward this end, we've started to ask our own IT support staff (particularly PT student workers) to link to a relevant FAQ article when they resolve a ticket. In this way, all users can learn more about FAQs and perhaps consider using them again in the future. We're also initiating an RT Ticket Grading "rubric" that emphasizes how RT can help improve the FAQs, which in turn may help reduce the number of tickets that are submitted. We know, it won't happen overnight, but we want the campus to know why we'll be linking to FAQs more in the future.



### DoIT By The Numbers

- 107,500,000** MB (megabytes) of non-research, usable storage or 107.5 TB (terabytes)
- 5,808,873** *myUMBC* logins (includes 50,610 paws, 11,665 posts, 34,034 comments, 2,759 spotlights, 292 groups)
- 2,656,462** Phone calls handled by the campus phone system
- 392,365** Page views of Blackboard on most active day (2/16/11). Daily average = 168,403
- 275,540** total documents stored on ImageNow (53,827 in FY11)
- 23,962** Support tickets resolved (7/1/10 to 6/30/11)
- 21,824** Wired data ports on campus
- 21,043** Help support calls (7/1/10 to 6/30/11)
- 14,000** unique Gmail users per week (25 GB quota = 25x greater for fac/staff, 50x greater for students vs. previous UMBC hosted quota).
- 8,534** AV service transactions (e.g., deliveries, laptop loans, support incidents)
- 8,385** Telephone ports on campus
- 4,200** Students using "audience response systems" (aka "clickers")
- 4,000** Computers in Active Directory (AD)
- 2,781** Blackboard course sections (not including approx. 400 multi-section Bb sites)
- 1,700** Weekly downloads of content on iTunes@UMBC
- 985** Wireless access points (85 percent campus coverage)
- 400** Daily views of UMBCTube (on YouTube)
- 160** Subscribers to the UMBC Digital Storytelling Community of Practice email list
- 106** PT DoIT student employees
- 81** FT DoIT staff (32 UMBC alumni)

By Jack Suess, VP and CIO

Welcome to the Division of Information Technology's (DoIT) second annual report. Last year, I identified four key initiatives for AY2010-2011:

- Upgrading Blackboard to version 9;
- Supporting iStrategy for financial reporting;
- Migrating to Google Apps for Education; and
- Launching *myUMBC* 3.0.

In addition, we announced plans to implement recommendations from the IT Restructuring Report, released in Spring 2010 (see <http://www.umbc.edu/provost/planning.html> for these



I'm pleased to report that these four initiatives have been extremely successful. While we did have issues with the overall performance of myUMBC the first week of classes in Fall 2010, we got these quickly addressed. In November 2010, we officially launched myUMBC Groups and we seen widespread adoption of this on campus. To date, there are more than 200 myUMBC groups in existence and more being created each week.

Blackboard version 9 has allowed UMBC to focus on improving the integration between SA and Blackboard, especially in terms of course enrollments. Over this past year we have redesigned the underlying connection to improve accuracy and timeliness of course enrollments. Moving forward, this work will allow us to integrate the Blackboard grade book with the SA final grade submission.

The migration to Google Apps for Education has been a great success. Students greatly enjoy the increased file space and the improved web-based interface to mail. We launched this effort in Fall 2010, bringing all new freshman and transfers into Google. In January 2011, we converted all other students. Starting in May 2011, we migrated all faculty and staff Oracle Calendar users over to Google Calendar.

Finally, the financial iStrategy deployment, named T-REX, was released in the spring and is quickly becoming the financial reporting tool of choice. With this initial deployment around state funds (aka fund code 1111) in place, we can work with the financial services department on other fund codes.

Implementing the IT Restructuring recommendations started in earnest in AY 2010-11 and we made substantial progress on eleven of the thirteen initiatives. For AY 2011-12 we have identified the following four restructuring initiatives as priorities for this year:

- Launch the Virtual Desktop Initiative. This will provide students with access to many of our specialized lab images from any machine with a broadband or wireless connection to the Internet;
- Implement the recommendations of the campus Web Development report. This report, issued in April 2011, identified a number of ways that UMBC could simplify and improve web development on campus (see <http://my.umbc.edu/groups/webdevelopment>);
- Expand library collaboration. In support of the Retriever Learning Center, DoIT is relocating our Helpdesk and renaming it the Technology Support Center; and
- Improve software licensing and volume hardware purchasing agreements.

We will also focus on two additional areas -- business continuity and audit compliance. This summer has demonstrated the importance of business continuity, between the power outage in June and Hurricane Irene in August we have seen a series of unprecedented events that stress the importance of vigilance. DoIT has kept critical services operational during this time but has identified areas where we were at risk during these emergencies and will work to improve our own business continuity. Also, in September 2011, the Office of Legislative Audit will begin its IT audit. This will run for three to six months and always requires a great deal of DoIT staff time.

This year marked our first annual survey on our services. Between this data and the responses we get when people submit tickets we are taking a number of steps to improve service on campus. Besides the creation of the Technology Support Center we are continuing to expand the use of RT and we are redoing our help pages or FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions).

Lastly, this year marks my thirtieth year at UMBC in IT. I want to thank the DoIT staff members who so ably did their jobs this past year. DoIT staff members are nationally recognized for their work and I'm honored to have the opportunity to lead this Division.

### Administrative Systems Enhancements

- Upgraded finance system to use new tools and replaced aging hardware to improve performance.
- Deployed new TRES data warehouse system to support improved access to state account (fund 1111) information.
- Updated the advising center and improved the process for course scheduling.
- Launched new Common Application for students
- Expanded document imaging to undergraduate admissions and financial aid.

### Virtual Desktop Pilot

- Partnered with Dell to launch a multi-campus solution for providing remote desktop access this fall. The solution will provide UMBC with 150 concurrent use seats.
- Other campuses participating in the pilot include UMCP, Towson, and Bowie.

### Campus Web Development Report

- DoIT to update web environment – target Fall 2011.
  - Install a WordPress hosting environment.
  - Upgrade to PHP 5 for better scripting & development.
- Leverage myUMBC groups (see below)
- Enhance training with video tutorials and self-help guides.
- Financial support needs: hire students for maintenance
- **More Info:** <http://my.umbc.edu/groups/webdevelopment>

### myUMBC Groups

- New institutional group type.
- New topics menu
- Updated start page with group updates
- Improved discussion options
- **More Info:** <http://my.umbc.edu/about/whatsnew>

**Google @ UMBC**

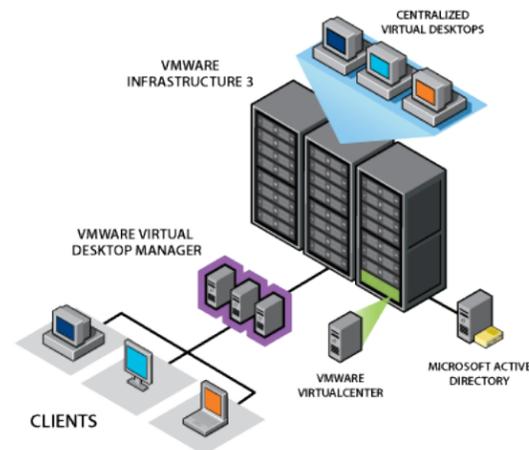
Home Discussions News Members Settings Spotlights

**Stay Current on Google Apps**  
Stay up to Date on Google Apps Feature Releases  
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**Google @ UMBC**  
Institutional Group  
251 members

**Welcome to the Google@UMBC group.**  
Please feel free to join this group to participate in discussions, questions, topics and issues of fellow UMBC Googlers.  
Click on the "Join this Group" button below to contribute to the Google@UMBC community.

1. Focus on implementing the recommendations of the IT Restructuring report (particularly the recommendations of the Web Infrastructure committee), launch the virtual desktop initiative, and continue to work on building collaborations between DoIT and IT staff in the departments. Continue to look for opportunities that can improve efficiency or cut costs.
2. Work with the functional offices on four important campus initiatives: a) streamline the business process for recruitment and admission efforts; b) improve integration between Blackboard and SA; c) enhance reporting of faculty workload data for academic units; and d) develop a mechanism to automate the email delivery of appropriate financial reports to department heads and PIs.
3. Work with the administrative and academic units to support the installation of technology infrastructure in PAH and the Retriever Learning Center, including audio visual technology and our new central network infrastructure to support next summer's opening of the PAH building.
4. Work with the USM CIOs to support systemwide IT initiatives in telecommunications and shared service offerings. In particular, work with the Maryland Research and Education Network (MDREN) telecommunications service to support shared service offerings and IT support for the Institute of Marine and Environmental Technology (IMET).
5. Working with the campus offices, continue to quietly expand the use of our RT (Request Tracker) trouble ticket system to new areas, and also pull together groups to identify and share best practices in customer service.
6. Work to streamline our support services to better align them to faculty, staff, and student needs. Work to improve web-based self-support tools for FAQ's and documentation.
7. Work with the faculty HPC (High Performance Computing) committee on research infrastructure support especially in terms of planning for future grant submissions; including identifying remote computer room space that can support expanding our HPC capacity.
8. Work with Faculty Development Center and the Provost's Office to continue to leverage instructional and audio/visual technology in support of pedagogical innovation in the classroom.
9. Support the Office of Legislative Affairs in their upcoming IT audit and work expeditiously to address any findings. Continue efforts to enhance and improve our IT security efforts for the campus and in support of instruction.
10. Develop a multi-year plan to update critical technology infrastructure for storage and computation services, including our Active Directory environment and virtual server environment.



By Jack Suess, VP for Information Technology & CIO  
*Reprinted from the DoIT News blog (7/31/11)*

Starting this summer, there will be a number of significant changes occurring in the way DoIT provides support to the campus community. The driver for this change is the new Retriever Learning Center (RLC) that will be opening in the Library this fall. The RLC will have a significant technology component and will provide 24-hour space for students. As part of this DoIT is making significant changes to our Helpdesk and establishing a student-focused unit named the Technology Support Center adjacent to the RLC.

This is one of the most exciting and important initiatives for students that have occurred on campus. So, to support the RLC, DoIT will be making the following changes.

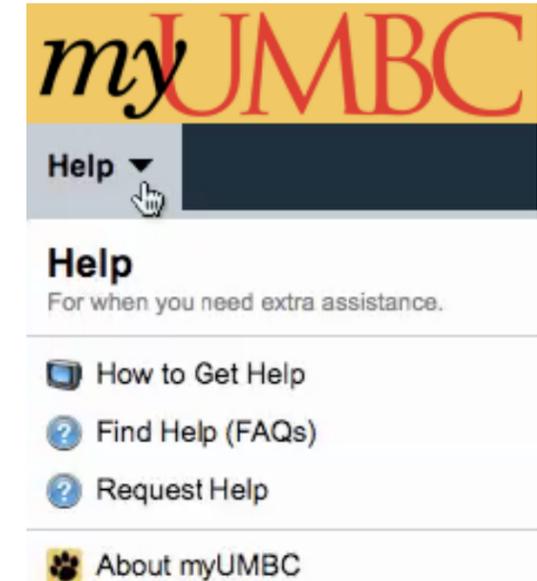
First, we are renaming the Help Desk to be called the Technology Support Center, which will be located next to the RLC. This change is primarily designed to provide walk-up support of students, though faculty & staff are welcome, too. Managed by Jamie Harrison, the TSC will work closely with the Library to proactively meet student technology support needs in a much more visible location.

Second, we encourage all students, faculty and staff to search, request and track technical support using the myUMBC Help menu or directly at <http://my.umbc.edu/help>. In moving student technology support to the Library we will only have two, remaining full-time staff (distributed in the Engineering Bldg.) who are available for faculty-staff support issues. We are exploring possible collaboration with other functional

offices, Departmental IT (DIT) support staff, as well as a way faculty might be able to request specially-trained students for one-on-one instructional technology assistance. All DoIT support groups will continue to monitor the primary 5-3838 technical support phone number, however given potential challenges in our capacity to respond immediately, we are working to improve the myUMBC Help interface so you can find, request and track your tech support needs in one location.

Third, to make certain that the technology classrooms in Engineering are properly supported we will be moving the Audio Visual (AV) services group from Academic IV-A 204 to Engineering 020. In addition to continuing to deliver mobile technology carts from this location, AV will oversee support for the computer classrooms in Engineering, including openings and closings.

Finally, to streamline management we are realigning the DoIT organization so that all three of these groups will be under the Instructional Technology and New Media unit led by Asst. VP John Fritz. As with any change, we know there will be some issues that will arise that we need to address. We are committed to working with the campus to make this a success and appreciate your patience while we make this change. If you have questions, suggestions or comments, please email them to John ([fritz@umbc.edu](mailto:fritz@umbc.edu)) or myself ([jack@umbc.edu](mailto:jack@umbc.edu)).



**Google Apps for Education**

- All students migrated.
- Google Calendar established as campus standard
- All faculty and staff enabled to use Google Documents
- Email & Calendar integrated with myUMBC.
- Better support for web and mobile devices.
- **More Info:** <https://my.umbc.edu/go/google>

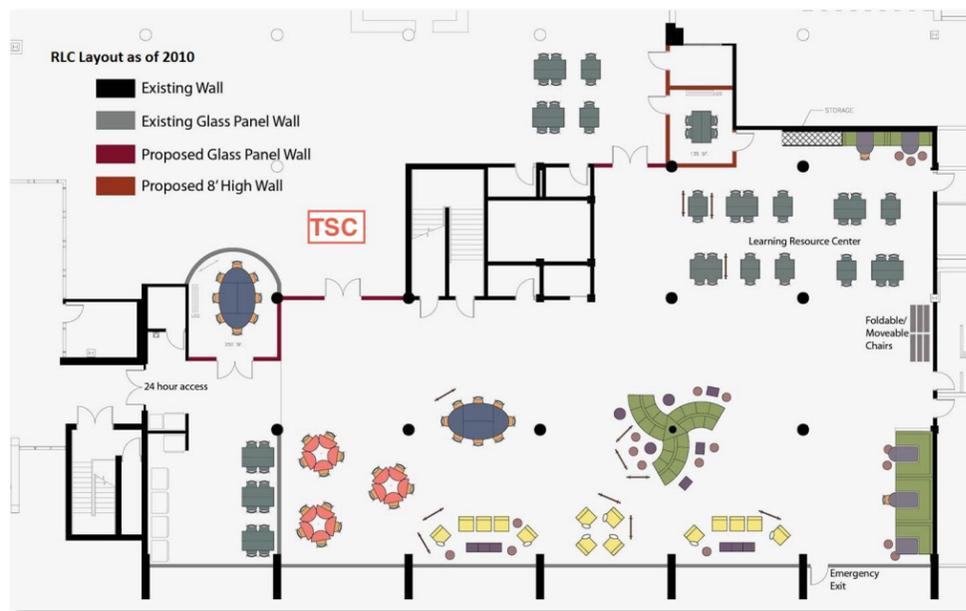


**Teaching and Learning Activities**

- Upgraded to Blackboard 9 in FY11 (2,810 courses)
- Introduced improved clicker system
- Updated 2 classrooms as well as Lecture Halls 2 & 5.
- Expanded the number of sections for the 1-credit media literacy lab to two per semester to meet growing interest.
- Continued to expand Bb reporting, including the Check My Activity system.
- **More Info:** <http://www.umbc.edu/oit/itnm>

**Technology Support Center (TSC)**

- Formerly known as the Help Desk
- Establishes new technology support model for students.
- Adjacent to the new Retriever Learning Center (RLC).
- Promotes face-to-face support of students in new space.
- **More Info:** myUMBC Help or <http://my.umbc.edu/help>



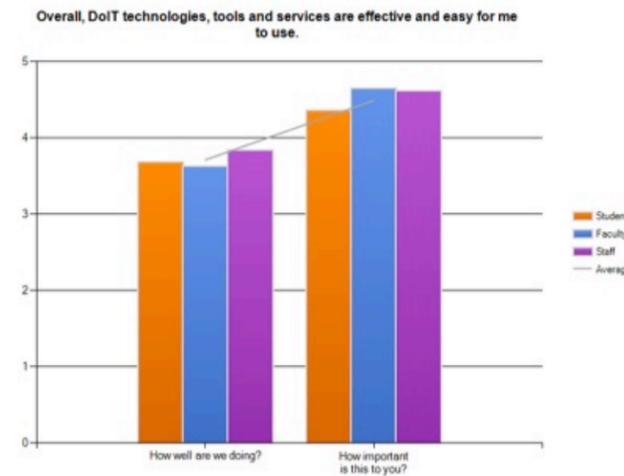
Conducted 4/18/11 to 6/16/11

645 responses: 328 students, 144 faculty, 173 staff

For detailed results, visit <http://www.umbc.edu/doit/metrics>.

**Key Findings**

- DoIT is doing a reasonable job providing reliable and easy to use services.
- Four areas to watch (scale: 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied)
  - Student Administration (SA) – Faculty (23.3%) rated 1 or 2, 50.1% rated 3 or less.
  - Blackboard – Faculty (21.4%) & Students (26.7%) rated 1 or 2.
  - myUMBC – Faculty (13.3%) & Students (13.5%) rated 1 or 2.
  - Innovative Solutions – Faculty (44.9%) & Students (40%) rated DoIT as 3 or less.



Student (326) Faculty (139) Staff (170) Skipped (10)  
 Scale: 1 = "not good/important" 5 = "very good/important"

**RT Satisfaction Results and Responses in FY11**

1,317 responses to "resolved ticket" survey

