[Our Spring 2024 Newsletter](#)

May 21, 2024

IN THIS ISSUE

- [Executive Director's Note](#)
- [Years of Service](#)
- [Promotions](#)
- [Department Updates](#)

UPDATE FROM
THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR!

As the academic year draws to a close, we eagerly anticipate the arrival of summer's warmth and a chance to spend some time with our families. And while summer vacations are on the horizon, we remain vigilant in addressing several ongoing challenges.

Our team continues to closely monitor the turmoil that has been seen in the FASFA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) process and are working with our schools to implement the appropriate application updates as they become available. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is another key component that requires scrutiny as it is ever present in many of the applications, we use every day and only becoming more prevalent. And as always, maintaining good cybersecurity is something that does not get to take a summer vacation.

We also continue to work on additional physical projects at WVNET with the installation of a new generator for our data center in the upcoming months and the continued progress in not only upgrading our network speeds but working to improve redundancy and diversity in our network paths.

So, enjoy your upcoming vacations and time away, knowing that WVNET services and support will still be available.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

HUMAN RESOURCES

State of West Virginia Public Service Recognition Week (May 5-11, 2024)

Since 1985, the United States has designated the first full week of May as Public Service Recognition Week (PSRW) to honor the men and women who serve our nation as federal, state, county, and local government employees.

The State of West Virginia Public Service Recognition Week is a time to honor and thank WV public employees for their service, beginning with 20 years of service (and proceeding in increments of five years). For 2024, WVNET will have one employee reaching their years of service milestones for the State of West Virginia:

25 years of Service to the State of West Virginia

Chris Freeman
Since December 1998, Chris has been an integral part of the WVNET Telecommunications Department. Initially stepping in as the primary field technician, Chris has journeyed to every county courthouse and college campus that WVNET has ever supported. His hands-on experience is vast: from installing modem chassis, routers, and switches to maintaining an array of communication equipment. Not only does he install, remove, and maintain essential hardware and systems, but he also plays a pivotal role as the Data Center lead. Here, he extends his expertise to mentoring newer technicians, ensuring top-notch customer service, troubleshooting both in-house and on-site, managing phone systems, and addressing the diverse needs of the Data Center. On the personal front, Chris has shared his life's journey with Laura Freeman since their union in August 1996. Together, they have built a blended family, boasting five children and six grandchildren.

Additionally, we are celebrating our wonderful employees' service milestones (5 years +) at WVNET:

25 Years of Service @ WVNET

Libby Cress
Chris Freeman

5 Years of Service @ WVNET

Adam McKeown

PROMOTIONS

John Taylor to Telecommunications Network Specialist III

John's promotion to Telecommunications Network Specialist III is a testament to his remarkable professional growth since joining WVNET in 2022. John previously worked for the Federal Bureau of Prisons as an Electronics Technician and Atlantic Broadband LLC. He holds an associate's degree in Information Technology with a specialization in Routing and Switching, bolstered by a CCNA certification. His technical proficiencies encompass telephone PBX, VOIP, fiber optic cabling, and Cisco routers and switches. Prior to his civilian career, John served with distinction in the U.S. Marine Corps for four years as a Field Radio Operator, showcasing his dedication and commitment to honorable service.

BUSINESS AND FINANCE

The summer is packed full of major deadlines for the WVNET business office. We have quite a few contracts up for renewal effective July 1 as well as preparing for the FY24 Financial Audit which takes place in late summer/early fall. So please keep an eye out for emails from the business office regarding renewals specific to your organization, such as for your Microsoft licenses through Crayon, as well as emails requesting information from and/or providing information to you for the

audit.

So if you need to contact anyone in the WVNET Finance-Business Office, you may reach the appropriate party at the following:

- Accounts Receivable – Libby Cress: lcress@staff.wvnet.edu or 304-225-0451
- Accounts Payable – Buffy Vehse: evehse@staff.wvnet.edu or 304-225-0487
- Manager of Business Operations and Procurement – Phil Snitz: psnitz@staff.wvnet.edu or 304-225-0483
- Chief Financial Officer – Donna Meadowcroft: dmeadowcroft@staff.wvnet.edu or 304-225-0472

CLIENT SERVICES

The [West Virginia Statewide Technology Conference](#) is slated to return in **2025**. In order to provide the best conference experience possible, we are conducting a survey to assess how to best meet the needs of our attendees. **Take the WVSTC 2025 Pre-Planning Survey**

BANNER SUPPORT TEAM

Employee Report

Ellucian Live 2024

Ellucian Live 2024 took place in San Antonio, Texas, from April 7 to 10. The conference theme was "Illuminate, Innovate, and Inspire." This was my first experience at Ellucian Live and my first time attending a large conference, with over 6,000 participants registered. The venue was one of the largest I have ever visited.

On the first day, keynote speaker Deon Sanders, alongside Ellucian's COO and CEO, aimed to inspire educators and showcase available Ellucian products for institutions. Since I primarily work in Banner finance, I attended related sessions on finance and accounts receivable. Though the sessions were informative, large attendance (around 70+ people) limited time for questions and addressing user issues.

On Day 2, Bill Nye was the keynote speaker, and the Great Eclipse was scheduled to occur. Ellucian reserved a park along the Riverwalk for attendees to watch the eclipse together, but poor

weather conditions meant we could only experience a brief period of darkness.

Day 3 featured William Shatner as the keynote speaker, wrapping up the conference as many attendees began departing after completing their sessions.

Overall, Ellucian Live was a valuable experience with over 300 sessions available and a venue that comfortably accommodated all attendees. The location on the San Antonio Riverwalk offered beautiful scenery and great dining options. I enjoyed the sessions and the area and am looking forward to the next Ellucian Live conference.

Banner Finance Program Analyst,
Cristina Shannon,
attended Ellucian Live 2024
and filed this report.

Emergency Relief for Students Applying for WV Financial Aid Programs

The financial aid application process for the 2024-2025 school year has been extremely tumultuous. Availability of the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) was held up for over three months, which delayed the data availability to schools for nearly three more months. Lingering questions remain about data accuracy and concern about lack of access to the system to make corrections. The system that processes the FAFSA is working sporadically with certain categories of students unable to submit the original application or to make any necessary updates to their application. As a result, there has been a 40% decrease in the number of FAFSAs submitted by West Virginia students for 2024-2025.

Governor Justice has declared an emergency response to this year's financial aid disaster by announcing that the FAFSA requirement will be waived for three West Virginia state financial aid programs – only for the 2024-2025 academic year. All other requirements for those programs must

be met to qualify for the funds.

Promise Scholarship

Basic minimum requirements to receive a $5500 Promise Scholarship include a cumulative 'B' high school grade point average, state residency, graduation from a West Virginia high school, minimum score of 21 on the ACT or 1080 on the SAT. Homeschooled students are also eligible. You must be a full-time student at a West Virginia college but there are some exceptions. See the detailed list of requirements and deadlines at https://www.collegeforwv.com/programs/promise-scholarship/.

West Virginia Higher Education Grant

The West Virginia Higher Education Grant can provide up to $3400 and is a need-based program for West Virginia residents who are full time college students. In order to show eligibility without a processed FAFSA, students can present to their financial aid office an eligibility letter for one of the following assistance programs: SNAP, TANF, Medicaid, CHIP, Child Care Subsidy Program, or WIC. For a detailed list of other eligibility requirements, visit https://www.collegeforwv.com/programs/wv-higher-education-grant/.

HEAPS Grant

The HEAPS (Higher Education Assistance for Part-time Students) Grant Program. This program is for West Virginia residents who are part-time college students. Awards vary based on number of credit hours taken. Since HEAPS is need-based, the FAFSA is normally required, but for 2024-2025, need can be established by presenting an eligibility letter for one of the following assistance programs: SNAP, TANF, Medicaid, CHIP, Child Care Subsidy Program, or WIC. Additional information about this program and its requirements can be found at https://www.collegeforwv.com/programs/heaps-grant/.

This has been a difficult year for students, families, and staff at colleges and universities, but we are working to keep WVNET's customers apprised of developments and opportunities as they become available.

How Are We Doing?

Your satisfaction is very important to us. WVNET has implemented a customer satisfaction survey link in our OZ ticketing system. When a help ticket is closed, the reporter will receive an email update with a link to allow customers to fill out the survey, and, if desired, request a call from a manager. To access the form in the OZ email, click on the link.

If you're not using OZ and you wish to take the survey, please feel free to complete the survey at **https://wvnet.edu/satisfaction-survey/**. We look forward to hearing from you. Have questions? Contact Harmony Garletts at **hgarletts@staff.wvnet.edu**.

Customer Satisfaction Survey

DEVELOPMENT TEAM

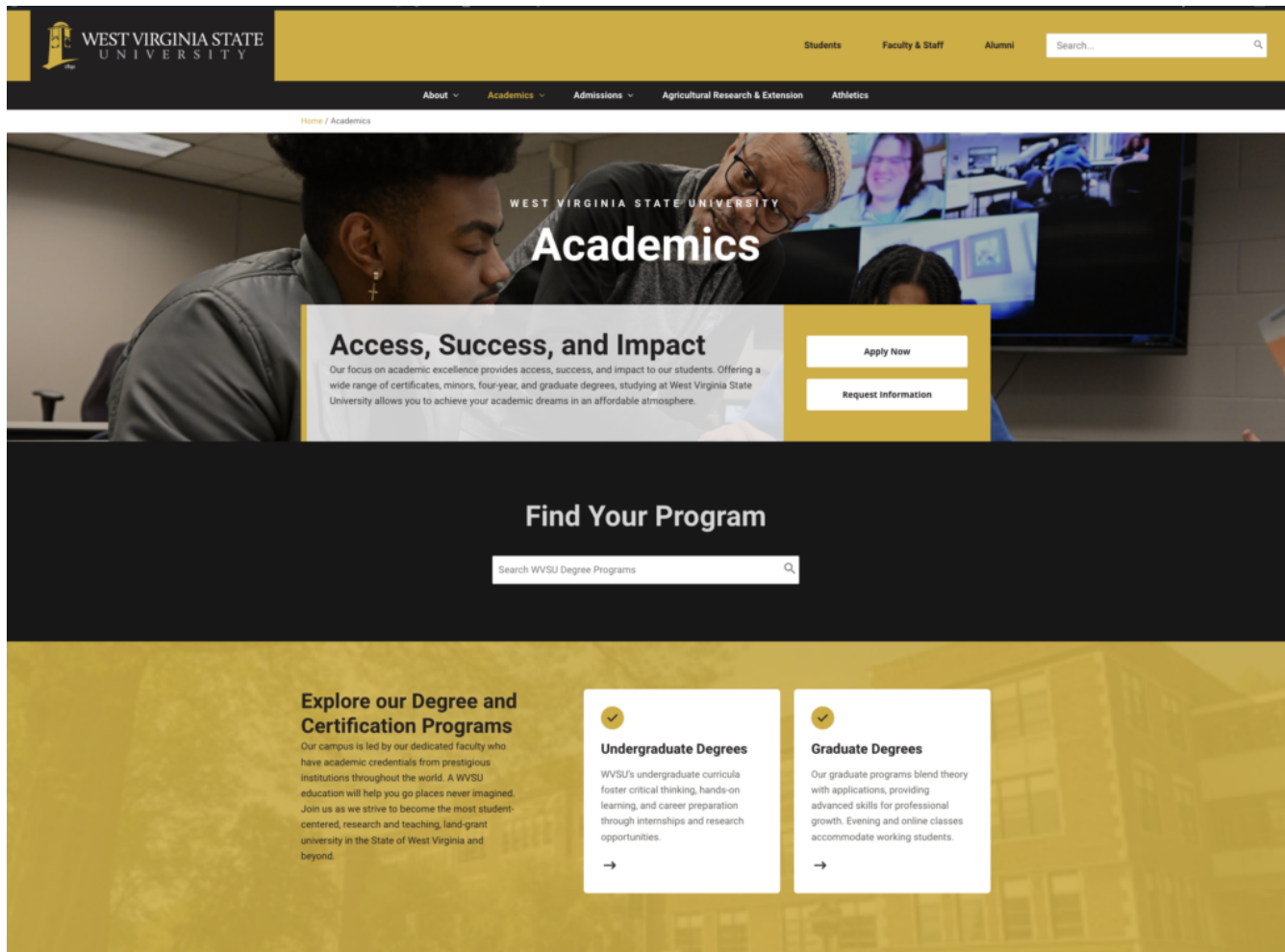The Development Team continues to make progress on various projects and professional development certifications.

Accomplishment

Adam McKeown has completed the [Treehouse Front End Development Techdegree](#) certification.

Projects

West Virginia State University Website
Our team has been working with West Virginia State University's University Relations department on a new university website and transition to a new content management system. The project is expected to launch over the summer. Sarah Barnes is managing the project with Lisa Bridges on design and content management, Chevee Dodd on development, and Adam McKeown on QA, documentation, training, and content management.

WVNET Website Update

The team is excited to announce they have been working on a redesign of the WVNetwork website. The redesign will feature a new modern and responsive design that will align with our updated branding. An overhaul of the site architecture will also allow users to find information more easily, and updated content will provide answers to common customer inquiries.

Your input can help us improve the information we present on the site and its functionality. We would appreciate any feedback you can provide: **Take the Survey Here**

TELECOM UPDATE

John Taylor applied for and was selected for the newly created Telecommunications Network Specialist III position. John has been a Telecommunications Network Specialist III since WVNET since October 2022. In that brief time, John has become an indispensable part of the Telecomm Group, taking on projects large and small and becoming an integral part of our team.

Kyle Atkins was promoted into the Telecomm Group 6 months ago and is quickly learning the nuances of being a Telecommunications Network Specialist I. Kyle began working for WVNET in our Network Operation Center back in September 2021 and has become a reliable part of our team.

We have installed 2 of our 4 Transit Ring routers in preparation for upgrading to 100Gbps circuits. The devices now reside in Pittsburgh, PA at 3ROX/PSC and Columbus, OH at OARnet. The other two machines will be installed in Morgantown and Charleston, WV awaiting the completion of the 100Gbps circuits. This will increase the available bandwidth around WVNET's high-speed Transit Ring 10-fold, to being capable of supporting 100Gbps per second.

WVNET Telecomm has been busy preparing for the migration of customers on Verizon circuits to Segra, after Segra won the WV State contract for network services. Many customers are affected and must be migrated fully by the end of this year.

WVNET Telecomm was in the Charleston Capitol Complex for a planned WVOT power outage where we gracefully shutdown and started up the Southern half of WVNET's network as WVOT staff installed a replacement UPS system. The outage went smoothly with all equipment returning to production with no persisting issues.

SYSTEMS UPDATE

Using Yubikeys for Two-factor Authentication (2FA)

Safeguarding your online assets in today's digital world is crucial. Relying solely on passwords often isn't sufficient anymore because hackers are becoming increasingly adept. That's where Two-Factor Authentication (2FA) steps in to provide an additional layer of defense. Think of it as adding a secondary lock to your door for extra security. When it comes to implementing 2FA, YubiKeys stand out as a top-notch option.

In short, a YubiKey is a small device that you can put on your keychain. It can be plugged into a computer or phone as an additional step to proving it's really you logging into your accounts.

YubiKeys help make your accounts super safe. They're better than codes sent by text because tricky hackers can't fool them. Every time you log in, you must use your connected YubiKey to prove that it is you. So, even if someone knows your password, they can't get in without your YubiKey.

After you connect a YubiKey to your accounts, you just plug it in or tap it on your phone when you want to log in. It's way easier than typing long codes or dealing with juggling multiple tricky duo authentication apps. You can take them with you wherever you go without any hassle since they are built to be small and durable.

A YubiKey can hold up to 25 secret passkeys on the device. These are unique and only on that specific YubiKey.

YubiKeys are great because they're compatible with a lot of websites and apps. Whether you're checking your emails, logging into work accounts, or online shopping, YubiKeys add an extra layer of security. They can even be used with apps like Bitwarden, where you can store your important passwords securely.

YubiKeys might require an initial purchase, but they're definitely worth it in the long run. If someone managed to hack into your accounts and steal your information, fixing that mess could cost you a fortune. But with YubiKeys, you're adding an extra layer of security that could save you

from dealing with all that trouble and expense later on.

In conclusion, think of YubiKeys as your personal bodyguards for keeping your accounts secure. They're easy to use, super safe, and can be used with many different online services. By using YubiKeys, you're ensuring that even if someone figures out your password, they won't be able to access your accounts without your special key. It's a smart move to protect yourself in today's digital world.