

Duke Office of Information Technology

Tracy Futhey talks about technology and the Duke employee

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Duke University is among the best institutions in higher education for its commitment to collaborative and innovative uses of technology “throughout every aspect of our lives,” spanning research, academic, co-curricular and administrative pursuits, Duke’s Chief Information Officer [Tracy Futhey](#) told 200 Duke faculty and staff Thursday in Griffith Film Theater.

Chief Information Officer Tracy Futhey speaks at Primetime. photo by Megan Morr

Futhey’s presentation for Primetime, a quarterly forum with Duke senior administrators, offered observations about emerging trends and the rise in national prominence of Duke as an information technology innovator and collaborator.

“There’s really never a time when people don’t say, ‘how can we work on this together,’” Futhey said.

What’s ahead for technology at Duke?

To see video excerpts of Tracy Futhey's Primetime presentation, [click here](#).

To listen to the full presentation in iTunes U, [click here](#).

Mobility will be increasingly important as people expect to be online anywhere at any time, Futhey said. Everything will be digital and online, requiring increased data-storage capacity and data-sharing capabilities.

Social networking will continue to evolve, enabling users to find one another wherever they are and to help them gather in online, “virtual” worlds such as Second Life. Student services set up an area in Second Life that allowed incoming first-year students to meet virtually before arriving on campus, Futhey said.

Duke will work to develop more options that give users the “ability to get at things yourself,” such as setting personal spam-filter levels, clicking on a Web browser button to increase e-mail capacity and to initiate a Web conference or set up a collaborative wiki, she said.

“The more we can make those available 24/7, the better,” Futhey said.

Futhey traced Duke's emerging leadership in information technology to 1993, when a faculty group issued a "clarion call" for improving computing on Duke so that it could recruit and keep faculty.

Those efforts have blossomed into such projects as the [Duke Digital Initiative](#). In 2004, as part of the initiative, Duke gave [Apple iPods to all undergraduate first-year students](#). It was unclear how the popular consumer device could be used beyond entertainment, but Duke thought it was something worth experimenting with.

"If we can't experiment with such things here where else can you do that?" Futhey asked. "We launched what at that time was a pretty bold experiment to find how those could be used for academic content and a way to use the iPod to deliver digital materials to students."

Duke found many classroom uses for the iPod right out of the box. This led to another thought: using the popular Apple music-delivery format iTunes to deliver course material through the iPod.

See Duke CIO talk about the iPod and iTunes U

By 2006, there were a lot of universities saying "we want to be doing what Duke's doing –delivering digital content in the format our students are already receiving," Futhey said.

Duke worked with Apple to develop a delivery system that has become the multi-university effort known as [iTunes U](#).

These efforts have come about in a highly collaborative setting, Futhey said, and are buttressed by Duke's strategic plan, "[Making a Difference](#)." Information technology plays a vital role in the plan, which spells out as a priority investment in emerging technologies to improve collaborative learning and to create new opportunities to connect knowledge in the service of society.

Duke's collaborative approach to IT combines centralized resources through the Office of Information Technology, which Futhey oversees in her role as vice president for information technology, with a proliferation of support and resources managed by other administrative and academic units. Futhey noted that the central OIT organization represents only one of three Duke University IT employees.

Futhey said she believed this approach has worked well because "there are some things that are best to do in a centralized organization but many other things that can be done locally," close to faculty, staff and student IT users.

Said Futhey, "We need a great deal of collaboration in everything we do every day."

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