13 December 2013

Highlands COLLEGE

Opportunities Achievement Success

Connetable Steve Pallet
Chairman, Digital Skills Scrutiny Sub-Panel
Scrutiny Office
States Greffe
Morier House
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Dear Connetable Pallet

The purpose of this letter is to outline Highlands College's response to the Economic Affairs Scrutiny Panel Digital Skills Sub-panel

1. Background

Highlands College runs the following courses that support those seeking to become digital professionals and currently has 117 full-time students, including 23 under-graduates, studying on the following programmes

- BTEC Level 2 Diploma in IT (4 GCSE equivalent)
- BTEC Extended Diploma in IT (3 A Level equivalent)
- FdSc Information Technology for Business Degree in conjunction with Plymouth University

These courses include embedded professional certifications such as CompTIA A+, CompTIA Network+, Microsoft Technical Associate and Microsoft Certified Professional status exams. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the 117 full-time specialist IT students who are currently studying at Highlands are housed in temporary accommodation.

2. Infrastructure

The Highlands College IT infrastructure can be summarised as

- 10 buildings all connected via fibre cabling
- 2 main buildings (University Centre & Turner) connect up to 10Gb between 3 chassis
- Remaining buildings connect up to 1Gb through fibre connectors
- 42 Switches within buildings are limited to 100Mb per port / machine.
- Approximately 640 student personal computers on the network – this includes specialist networks for both Media and Information Technology
- Wifi is unevenly distributed around campus, as speed is throttled due to insufficient bandwidth currently being available

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Upgrades are required to

- Bring the majority of older mixture of fibre cabling up to newer grade. (Some cabling has been in place for 15 years or longer)
- Reduce the 2 main buildings to 2 chassis and increase speed up to 40Gb.
- Increase the speed to remaining building to 20Gb per building.
- Replace current switches to newer models that can accommodate 1G per port / machine.
- Bring ICT onto the main backbone to make use of expected Gb broadband connection.
- Distribute a more evenly and manageable Wifi service

3. Implementation of the *Vision of IT in Education*

Highlands College is working closely with the DfESC in development of the college's strategy for IT, and the college has received the full range of information which has been provided to schools. In addition, there have been a number of briefings with officers of DfESC in order to develop a shared understanding of how to proceed. Within the college there is a group of 4 senior managers working on the development of the college's strategy and the intention is to have an outline draft completed before for the beginning of 2014, with its formal approval by DfESC before the end of the 2014 spring term

Setting aside the updating of infrastructure, internet connectivity, wifi and the use of pcs or 'thin clients' as identified in section 3 the strategy will focus on a number of differing developments and in all likelihood will include

- Flipped learning – using an action research approach, undertake a 12 month project to increase the volume of flipped learning resources made available to students
- Classroom observation using iPads – using technology to allow all lecturing staff to record sessions and be subsequently coached as to how to develop their practice
- Transforming the current Learning Resources Centre so it becomes a 21st century learning space, whilst at the same time developing a new library for use by University Centre students
- Building on existing relationships with employers to increase the number of FT students undertaking an IT based work-placement.
- Looking to extend approaches to teaching and learning which will enhance digital fluencies, such creativity, solution, information, collaboration media and global citizenship
- Seek to expand the range of BYODs which can be supported

4. Training requirements of Highlands staff

As part of Highlands' "day to day" business a training needs analysis is scheduled to be completed before the end of the 2014 academic year. Nevertheless, it is still possible to identify a number of general training requirements for Highlands staff, and these include:

- Technical training for IT specialist teaching staff in areas such as Mobile App Development (iOS and android) ; emerging Programming Technologies and Techniques – current trends in software development; Virtualisation/Cloud Technologies –3D Modelling for 3D Printing ; Emerging Web Technologies; Information Security Training – e.g. Certified Information Systems Security Professional

- The training of teaching staff in the production of flipped learning resources. A training programme has been provisionally agreed with Jon Bergmann, one of the originators of flipped learning www.jonbergmann.com, for September 2014
- The training in the knowledge of when best to apply digital learning technologies to best support teaching and learning. On-line resources to support this activity have already been identified www.teachinghow2s.com
- The training of staff in the use of mobile technologies to support their own professional practice www.starlesson.com

5. Adult training and skills

In addition digital professionals endeavouring to update or extend their knowledge and skills have access to the following professional qualifications through Highlands

- CompTIA A+
- CompTIA Network +
- CompTIA Security +
- CompTIA Strata
- MCITP - Windows 7 Configuration (70-680)
- MCITP - Windows 7, Enterprise Desktop Support Technician (70-680 & 70-685)
- MCITP - Windows Server 2008 Active Directory Configuration (70-640)
- MCITP - Windows Server 2008 Applications Infrastructure Configuration (70-643)
- MCITP - Windows Server 2008 Network Infrastructure Configuration (70-642)
- MCITP - Windows Server 2008, Enterprise Administrator (70-647)
- MCTS - Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007-10 - Configuration (70-630)
- MCTS - Microsoft Windows SharePoint Services 3.0 - Configuration (70-631)

Furthermore, Highlands recognises that vocational education is more than just training and the development of a narrow technical capacity in one particular area. Highlands is currently working in partnership with Winchester University's Centre for Real World Learning to develop a wider range of vocationally desired outcomes, such as, routine expertise, resourcefulness, functional literacies, craftsmanship, business like-attitudes and wider skills for personal growth.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Dr Gary Jones
Interim Head