

IT@UofT Annual Report

BRINGING OUR VISION TO LIFE

SEPT. 2023 – AUG. 2024

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO | Information Technology Services

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BRINGING OUR VISION TO LIFE

This Annual Report (2023-2024) provides a comprehensive review of our key accomplishments, a budget report on previous activities and highlights projects on the horizon for Information Technology Services (ITS) at the University of Toronto.

Context

In the past year, Information Technology Services has achieved significant milestones, completing the fifth year of priority-driven activities guided by the IT@UofT Strategic Plan (2019-2024). At the same time, this Annual Report (2023-2024) comes at a time of significant disruption in the technological landscape and ongoing fiscal constraints within the University. In the face of these challenges, ITS remains focused on activities which meet the evolving needs of our academic community.

Through collaboration with institutional partners, advisory boards, working groups and the tri-campus community, we are confident that, together, we can successfully navigate the currents of change, guided for the coming three years by our IT@UofT Strategic Plan (2025-2027).

Learn more about the IT@UofT Strategic Plan for 2025-2027 at its.utoronto.ca/ituoft-strategic-plan.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PAST YEAR



Information security

Expanded security awareness training and simulated phishing exercises

- Through expansion of security awareness training and simulated phishing exercises, we are empowering staff to recognize and respond effectively to potential cyber threats. This proactive approach reduces the risk of successful phishing attacks and data breaches.

Advanced implementation of endpoint protection

- The initial phase of our robust endpoint protection measures was deployed, safeguarding devices against malware, ransomware and unauthorized access. This ensures uninterrupted productivity and protects sensitive data, contributing to overall organizational resilience.

Comprehensive vulnerability management program

- Regular vulnerability assessments and timely patch management minimizes security gaps. By proactively addressing vulnerabilities, we maintain a secure IT environment, reducing the likelihood of security incidents.

Firewall-as-a-service model

- Our transition to a firewall-as-a-service model offers a new option for network security management for units and divisions needing support in this aspect of information security. It provides scalability, flexibility and cost savings while maintaining robust protection against external threats.

Password manager

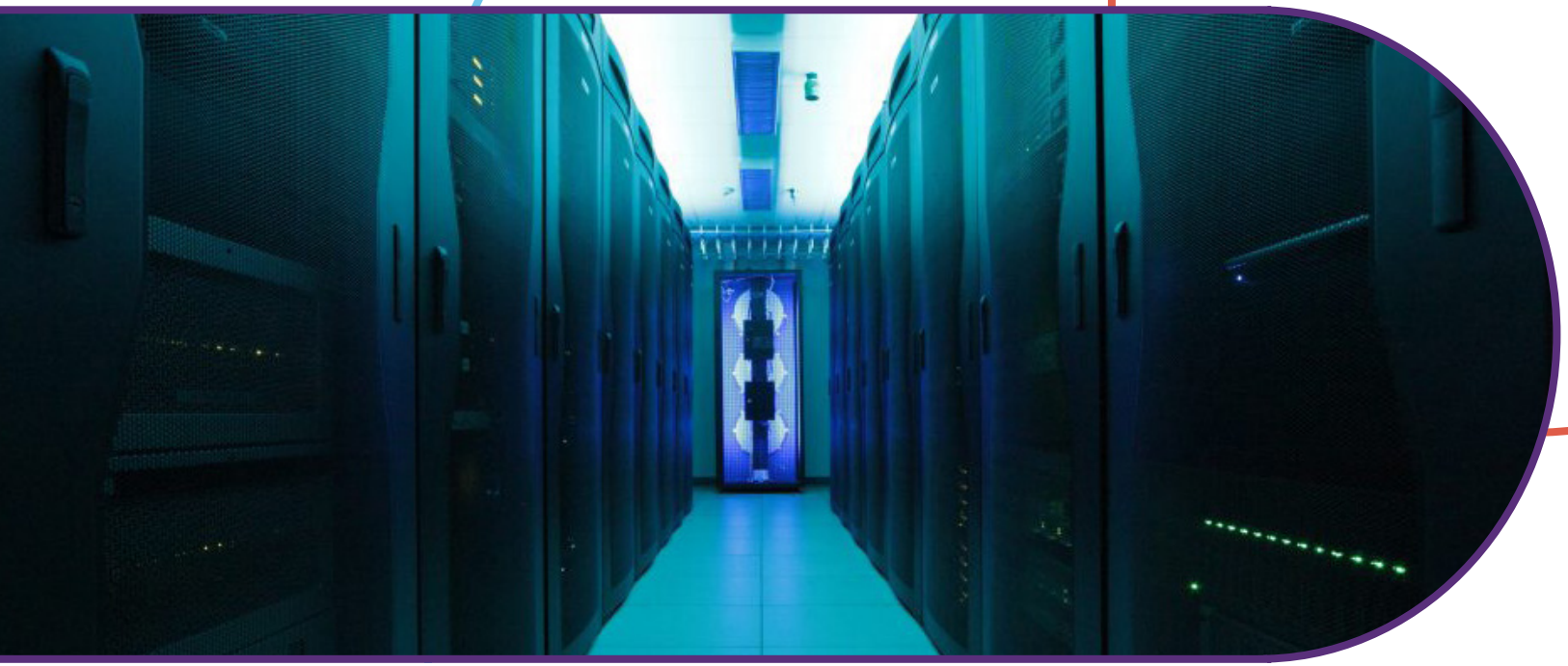
- Our new 1Password service allows students, faculty and staff to organize and store all personal and professional passwords in one secure place. It enhances security and safeguards accounts against common cyber threats.

Tabletop-as-a-service

- Tabletop-as-a-service prepares staff and faculty with tools and training to better respond to various information security incident types. The service is designed to enhance strategic decision-making skills in different cyber security scenarios.

Information Security

- **Endpoint protection** for **13,250** additional devices resulted in **9,750** malware threats detected and mitigated.
- **Security awareness training** onboarded **12,015** new users.
- **General password manager** service launched with **5,000** licenses acquired for staff, faculty and librarians.



Enterprise services

Azure landing zone services

- Our expanded Azure landing zone services simplify cloud adoption, providing standardized, secure environments for application development and deployment. This accelerates innovation while maintaining compliance.

Research data centre

- A new research data centre with energy capture features has been built in partnership with the Faculty of Arts and Science and Facilities and Services.

VoIP – Next generation telephony

- Successful migration of more than 11,000 phone numbers from the University's former VoIP solution, GoCo's Communicator 7, to Microsoft Teams Phone has been completed. This milestone marks the completion of U of T's Teams Phone migration project.

Service and knowledge generative AI chatbot prototype

- A prototype environment for AI development using natural language processing and AI-powered assistants has been implemented to improve knowledge access for Enterprise Information Systems (EIS) services and provide end-users with efficient access to services such as the ITS Private Cloud.

Digital learning support

Generative AI (GenAI) chatbot for the community

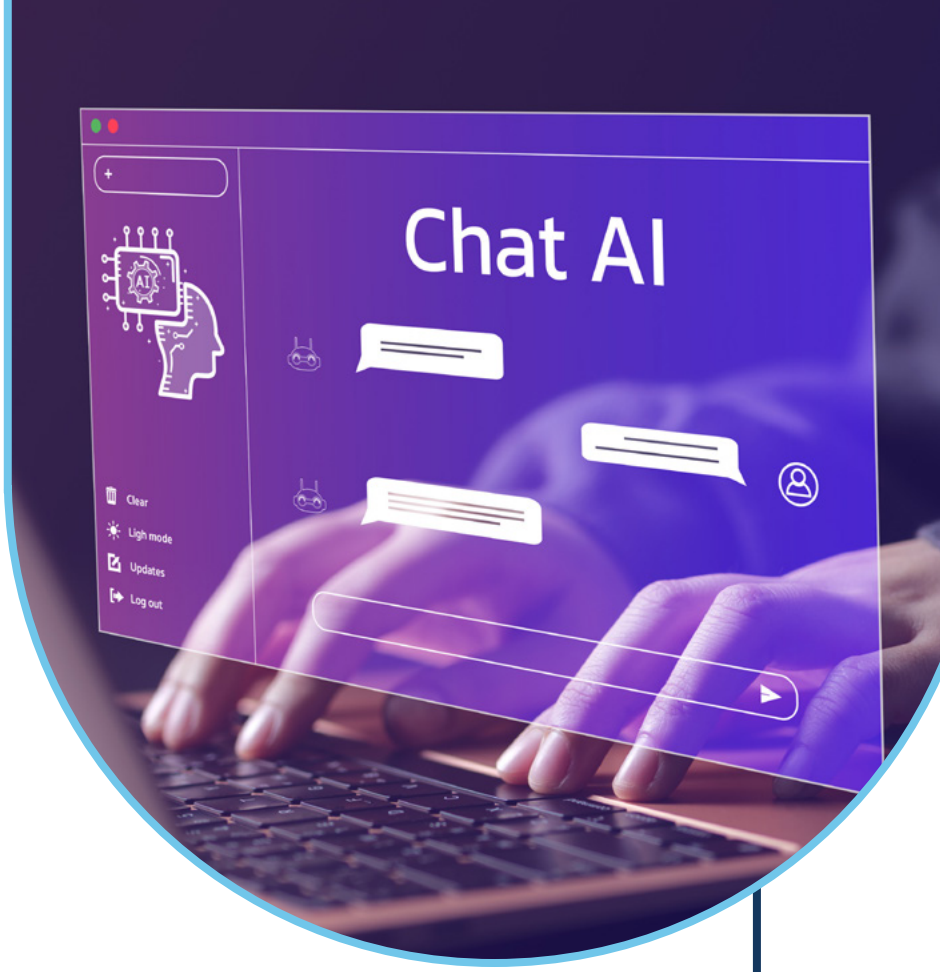
- The protected version of Microsoft Copilot chatbot is available through our institutional Microsoft licence and assists in day-to-day administrative and academic activities, while protecting user data. This tool can meet a range of uses to improve productivity and personalize learning and information retrieval.

GenAI support resources for instructors

- New resources have been developed and shared to empower instructors to leverage GenAI effectively in teaching. These supports bridge the gap between technology and pedagogy, fostering innovative and engaging learning environments.

Social annotation tools

- A suite of social annotation tools is now available to facilitate collaborative learning and knowledge sharing. New tool guides support application choice and outline strategies for encouraging active participation, critical thinking and deeper engagement with course content.



Academic technology

- **Hypothesis social annotation platform** adopted across **41** courses with **1,835 learners** participating in collaborative knowledge creation.
- **Microsoft Copilot** professional development sessions had **339 registrants** for orientation on use of the platform.

System and process improvements

Process designs for HR systems

- A transformation of our HR system of the hire-to-retire cycle has been initiated, aiming for a streamlined administrator experience, improved data accuracy and better employee experiences through implementation of new services via the SAP Success Factors Employee Central platform.

Service delivery workflow

- Additional features and workflows have been implemented within the ServiceNow ticket and support environment to simplify service requests, incident management and change management. This is reducing response times and enhancing user satisfaction.

Enterprise Service Centre

- **314,812 incident tickets** for ITS opened in ServiceNow.
- ITS average incident response time: **10.8 hours.**
- Survey shows **90.3 per cent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied** with ITS service.

UTmail+ email service update

- The M365 email cleanup project involves a comprehensive review of all email accounts and migration or sunset of legacy accounts to minimize risks and vulnerabilities and to ensure our resources are allocated and managed efficiently.

Electronic funds transfer

- Payment methods are being updated as we transition vendors from paper cheques to Electronic Funds Transfer. This initiative will help to increase efficiency and transparency as well as provide a convenient, cost-effective way to distribute recurring payments to established Canadian vendors.

Next Generation Student Information Services (NGSIS)

Student advising platform extension

- The student advising platform (Salesforce CRM) has been extended to better enable consistent best practice advising within and between divisions. Advisors access comprehensive student activities and records, track interactions, provide coordinated support and enhance student success.



Digital platform

- Continued implementations of the new cloud-based data replica, allowing systems to securely access the Repository of Student Information (ROSI) data, along with a design and implementation of enhanced Application Programming Interface (API) functionality and ongoing API management.

Course management

- Continued development and expansion of our suite of curriculum and course management systems (course information system, accommodated testing services application, curriculum management and curriculum publisher) improves efficiency and transparency in curriculum management.

Operational and academic reporting and analytics

- Power BI is being leveraged for new reports in applications, including curriculum management, absence declaration, the course information system and transfer credit equivalencies, resulting in greater transparency and streamlined processes.



Engaging our community

- The annual IT@UofT conference returned to an in-person format in 2024, serving to foster collaboration, knowledge sharing and skill development among 533 attendees.
- Ongoing training sessions on new digital workplace tools are offered through Connect + Learn programs and new self-serve toolkit for Power BI users.
- As part of the consultation for the refresh of our current IT@UofT Strategic Plan, approximately 290 community members participated in town halls and advisory group meetings to provide input.

PROJECTS ON THE HORIZON

Looking ahead, our report outlines key initiatives for 2024 and beyond, in alignment with the priorities set forth in our refreshed IT@UofT Strategic Plan for the next three years.



New identity management infrastructure

- Our new institutional licence for Sailpoint will enhance identity and access management, enabling digital transformation and ensuring digital trust. Improved efficiency, strategic enablement and security are key benefits. This is the first step in a long-term initiative to modernize our approach to identity, ensuring we deliver intentional and secure digital experiences to every member of our community.

Timely detection and response to cyber threats

- Continued progress in our ability to quickly detect and respond to cyber threats and incidents. This will unify visibility of threats faced by the University, automate repetitive tasks and foster extensive collaboration with higher education partners like The Canadian Shared Security Operations Centre (CanSSOC) to mitigate common cyber risks.

OneVPN

- Our new institutional service to provide a secure and scalable remote work solution that allows the right access to the right people at the right time in whatever location they choose to work.

Digital learning virtual chatbot pilot project

- Exploration of customized GenAI chatbots in course contexts will build insight and understanding of the potential for student learning and support GenAI enabled learning environments.

Quercus data insights

- Building an institutionally supported learning record store and learning analytics dashboard will enable instructors to visualize course-level student activity data within Quercus. This will provide deeper insights into student activity.



Administrative systems transformation

- Continued progress with SAP Onboarding and Employee Central implementation which will streamline HR processes. This is a key element of advancement of our digital transformation strategy to continue modernizing the University's core administrative systems.
- Establish Student Information Systems (SIS) strategy and roadmap to transform and modernize student systems platform and capabilities.
- Enable improved reporting through development of micro-credential course and learner data infrastructure and workflow processes.
- Refresh infrastructure for institutional data, analysis and reporting systems in collaboration with Institutional Research and Data Governance Office.

Research solutions

- In partnership with the Office of the Vice-President for Research and Innovation and the Centre for Research and Innovation Support, initiate planning to support sustainable solutions and wayfinding for U of T researchers seeking commercial and private cloud technologies.

Portfolio management

- Implement project tracker dashboard enhancements streamlined for currency in Power BI Dashboard for strategic portfolio management.
- Implement change advisory board to assess, prioritize, authorize and schedule changes as part of the change control process for institutionally supported services. Establish service level management targets when applications put into production.

Network and enterprise infrastructure

- Facilitate adoption of Network-as-a-Service at the departmental level to reduce duplication and risk.
- Advance and mature standardized cloud services to the University's IT community.

Service management

- Implement single department faculty customer relationship management strategy to improve ease of access to services and applications.
- Enhance and integrate existing UniversITy Service Catalogue for information technologies with additional data and functionality.

Professional development advisory group

- Leverage new cross-divisional professional development advisory group that will collaborate to align professional development opportunities with strategic priorities to ensure targeted skill development and knowledge sharing across divisions.
- Focus on training to support IT professionals in use and implementation of GenAI tools and functions.

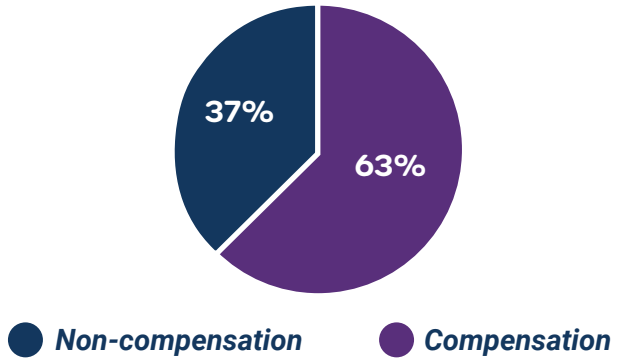


BUDGET REPORT

ITS continues to deploy prudent fiscal management techniques to minimize its annual carry forward balance. As of April 30, 2024, the majority of the carry forward balance is attributed to several existing purchase order balances, committed to execution of ongoing projects. Another source of the transitory carry forward balance is stemming from planned savings dedicated solely to Employee Central Phase 2 project execution that commenced during summer 2024. Once these items are taken into account, the remaining carry forward balance (at $200k) is negligible.

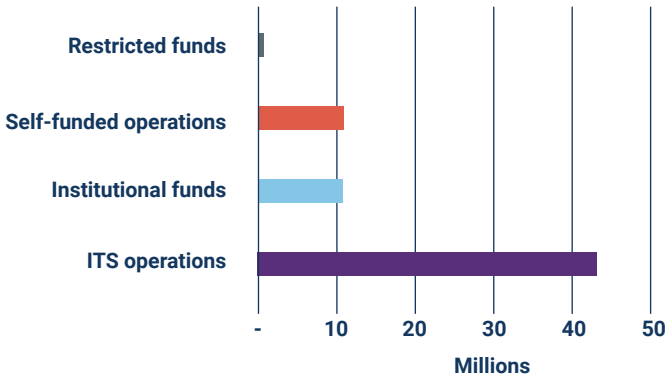
ITS total expenditures

$58.8M | F2024



ITS total expenditures by category

F2024



CLOSING

We are excited about the strides made in the past year to extend our technological capabilities. Our combined efforts have enhanced the digital experience and strengthened digital trust for our community. Our achievements are a testament to the dedication and collaboration of our team, partners and stakeholders. The new projects planned for the coming year hold promise for driving further innovation and excellence. These initiatives have been identified as priorities for advancing the goals articulated in our IT@UofT Strategic Plan for 2025-2027, ensuring that our IT services continue to support and empower the University of Toronto's mission and vision.

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