

The Miami Student

I.T. services call center outsourced to D.C. educational technology corporation

By Asst. News Editor Jake Gold

In order to cut costs and increase utility, Miami IT Services began subcontracting its help desk earlier this year. The new system, managed by Blackboard — an educational technology company based in Washington — is operated out of Somerset, KY, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

In the switch, fourteen Miami employees were terminated: four full-time staff members, three contract employees, six student employees and the Assistant Vice President for End User Services, McVey says.

The university made the change as recommended by a 2015 report by the Ohio Task Force on Affordability and Efficiency in Higher Education. The report suggested that “each institution must conduct an assessment of non-academic operations that might run more efficiently by a regional cooperative, private operator or other entity.”

For Miami, it’s worked. Since outsourcing the support desk operations to Blackboard on Oct. 17, the university has seen a 43 percent decrease in costs associated with support, according to Cathy McVey, the senior director for IT communications and customer advocacy.

Two employees have joined in the transition. One Blackboard staff member is located in Oxford for the first year of the agreement and one permanent, full-time position was filled to manage the Miami-Blackboard relationship.

“The reality of the university budget — not only Miami, but across the state — is we’re having to tighten down budgets and really watch where we’re spending money,” said McVey, making a theatrical strangling gesture. “And how we’re doing that as efficiently as we can.”

Though the people answering the phone are different, the support desk can be reached in the same ways it was before: over the phone, over email or through live chat.