

INTRODUCING MARTHA: LEVERAGING COGNITIVE AUTOMATION TO CREATE AN EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE



GW IT at [The George Washington University](#) (GW) is constantly looking for new ways to simplify access to the educational systems and services students need: online learning and collaboration tools, software and business apps, email and calendar, backup and storage, and more.

The size and diversity of our student community complicates the challenge. We have 26,000 students from 50 states and 130 countries.

Automation has helped IT keep pace with demand. We're now taking the next step—[Cognitive Service Management](#)—to ensure the quality experience students expect in the digital economy. We're embracing cognitive technologies in a big way. One of the most exciting examples is the addition of Martha to our service desk.

Who is Martha? A chatbot. Martha is available 24/7 to help students connect to GW's wireless network, register devices, and get assistance with other requests. Students interact with Martha via text or web browser using everyday natural language.

Martha Joins the Staff

Two years ago, we moved our on-premise Remedy IT service management solution to the cloud so that our staff could take advantage of new and innovative capabilities—for example, cognitive automation—that come with [BMC Helix ITSM](#) and [BMC Helix Digital Workplace](#). We created Martha

using the capabilities of [BMC Helix Platform](#) and the [BMC Helix Chatbot](#), both of which are part of Helix Digital Workplace.

Martha began as a pilot project. We limited the scope to keep everything manageable while we learned the ins and outs of chatbot technology. We targeted incoming freshman because, being new to the GW network, they need a lot of support—especially during the first few weeks of the semester. We identified the 14 most common support requests from this audience and set them up in the chatbot.

We used YouTube videos, email, and Twitter to entice people to contact Martha instead of the service desk. It was an easy sell because students prefer using the latest technologies to get what they need on their own.

A Resounding Success

The pilot clearly demonstrated that cognitive automation is a winner in our environment. Students chatted with Martha 4,581 times during the pilot period, an impressive number considering the limited audience and scope of the pilot. During the pilot period, the service desk received 8,106 requests, and those requests were not limited in audience or scope. Most gratifying was that the pilot participants loved Martha. In the post-pilot survey, 88% of participants said Martha should become a permanent resource.

What's more, in the past we could not cost justify the additional help desk staff required for 24/7/365 support. So students who preferred to work late at night were on their own. With Martha's help, we can now support students around the clock without adding staff. In addition, because of Martha's popularity, students are more likely turn to the chatbot instead of the service desk. That will significantly reduce the load on service desk agents and free them up to handle tier 3 and 4 issues.

A Bright Future

Word of Martha's success is spreading. Departments outside of IT have contacted us asking how chatbot technology can help them leverage their knowledge bases to enrich their students' educational experiences. And chatbot technology is but one component of our vision for cognitive automation as the foundation for the [digital transformation](#) at GW.

Learn more about how BMC is empowering the [future of service](#).