UNCG to Move Faculty/Staff Email to Google

Outsourcing expected to improve service, contain costs

After an evaluation of the benefits and risks of outsourcing faculty and staff email, ITS has decided to proceed with moving faculty and staff email services to Google Apps for Education (GAFE). UNCG’s implementation of GAFE, branded as iSpartan, will replace Lotus Notes as the University’s designated email service for faculty and staff. The transition to Google is expected to improve email services and contain costs.

The decision to outsource faculty and staff email follows the successful implementation of iSpartan email for students in August 2008. An internal pilot in ITS this year evaluated how GAFE’s email and calendaring services compared to what faculty and staff were accustomed to experiencing in Lotus Notes. ITS’ evaluation also included analysis of input and feedback from campus groups and stakeholders. Todd Sutton, University Webmaster, said that ITS determined that GAFE offers the potential for more robust services and flexibility beyond what is currently offered in the Lotus Notes environment. These services include increased functionality and high availability.

The migration of faculty and staff email accounts to iSpartan will begin with an opt-in initiative for departments this fall. Plans are to move all email accounts to iSpartan by the end of 2010. More information about this project is located at http://its.uncg.edu/projects/Apps_for_Education/.

Upgrades/Changes in ITS Computer Labs

In recent months, ITS has made several changes to ITS-managed computer labs to enhance services and security. These changes also reflect a reduction in some services.

The Pharos Pay-for-Print system has been upgraded to be compatible with the new SpartanCard online billing system. To print in locations with pay-for-print stations (ITS computer labs, print kiosks), users are now required to swipe their UNCG ID card. The upgraded system does not permit sharing of UNCG ID cards (or guest cards). Card holders can now view their printing charges through the “My Accounts” tab in Blackboard. Go to http://its.uncg.edu/Labs/Pay_For_Print/ for details about pay-for-print.

ITS has expanded the software available through the Virtual Computing Lab (VCL) environment. The VCL allows students and faculty to reserve the use of specific software packages remotely over the Internet. For more information about the VCL environment, including the list of applications available, visit http://its.uncg.edu/vcl/.

The AD environment replaces services offered by Novell such as departmental storage space and access to networked printers. The switch from Novell to AD offers savings in equipment and software costs and a simplified hierarchy for accessing files in storage on the network (e.g., departmental share space). The GCN offers increased security features designed to protect the University’s computing environment and the data within it.

ITS is working with departments to minimize the disruptions associated with the migration. For more details about the AD/GCN project, visit http://its.uncg.edu/Projects/AD/ or contact 6-TECH at 256-TECH (8324).
New Functionality in Banner

ITS and representatives from other University divisions worked together on two projects to develop new functionality and improve efficiency for Banner administrative users.

As part of the Banner Expedited Account Creation project, new employees will automatically receive a Banner account when they receive their other UNCG accounts. This change reduces the amount of time it takes to get initial Banner access set up. The UNCGenie Timeout Extension project increased the time-out period from 15 to 60 minutes for staff who use the UNCG Budget Flex transfer feature in UNCGenie and for those who administer and approve Electronic Personnel Action Forms in Banner HR, thus reducing the likelihood of having to re-enter data that may have been lost due to a shorter time-out period.

These two projects are examples of a recently adopted methodology developed by ITS and Enterprise Applications leader Laura Young. The new process aims to expedite the completion of small projects that involve one or two technical skill sets, fewer than 80 hours of effort, and coordination among a number of decision-makers.

Campus Technology Updates

ITS Computer Labs Reservations Deadline

The deadline to submit requests to reserve ITS-managed computer labs for the spring semester is November 7. Requests should be coordinated first at the departmental level or by lab committees before submitting them to ITS. ITS will process requests received after the deadline on a first-come, first-served basis. Visit http://its.uncg.edu/Labs/Reservations/ for more details about the lab reservation process.

New Software Web Site

ITS has updated its software Web site (http://its.uncg.edu/Software) to provide the campus community with better information about UNCG’s software environment. The new Web site includes an A-Z list of software applications available on the UNCG network, software FAQs, and information about how to request software for campus access, software licensing, accessible software, and purchasing software.

Microsoft E-Learning

UNCG is now offering Microsoft E-Learning online training for students, faculty, and staff. For information about how to access the E-Learning courses, log on to 6-TECH Online (https://6-tech.uncg.edu/) and search for “Microsoft E-Learning.”

Lenovo Online Ordering Site Coming Soon

Through UNCG’s Campus-wide Hardware Procurement program, University departments can order computers (Lenovo and Dell) at discounted prices. On October 30, departments will be able to purchase Lenovo computers online through the vendor’s new Web-based point-of-sale site. To order, go to http://its.uncg.edu/Technology_Purchases/CHP/ and click on the Purchase Hardware link.

Windows 7

Microsoft released the Windows 7 operating system on October 22. A project to investigate implementing Windows 7 on campus will begin early next year.

Information Browsing Continued

Last time in this column, we discussed how “active” Web content such as JavaScript and Flash movies can create a security risk while browsing. This issue we continue the theme of browser security and talk about why to use distinct browser sessions for sensitive and public Web browsing.

There are two types of Web usage that need to be kept distinct. You want to separate browsing that includes any private data (your bank or uses credentials that can access private data (your UNCG email) from all other Web browsing.

Probably the simplest way to accomplish browser session separation is to commit to exclusively using one company’s browser for sensitive browsing and one for public Web browsing. Internet Explorer and Firefox do not share plugin or profile information, or share memory space when running, so it is unlikely a malicious page on one could access a session running on the other. Depending on the browser, it is probably not enough to run two copies of the same company’s browser concurrently—the potential for one window to access the other’s data exists.

While the above may be the simplest method, it is not the most secure. If the operating system is compromised, the browser is too. A more secure option is to divide your browsing habits between two computers. This can be done with separate physical computers or with a virtual machine running on your primary computer (e.g., VMWare) or accessed remotely (e.g., Citrix).

Web security requires a combination of technological solutions and appropriate user behavior. Browser session separation can be a helpful tool in improving your security on the Web.

— ITS Security Office

Some readers reported difficulty using the NoScript plug-in mentioned in the last security article. In Firefox, it is possible to add exceptions to NoScript blocking by either clicking the Option button in the lower right corner when a page has blocked content or by going to Tools, Add-ons, and NoScript Preferences and adding a domain or site to the whitelist tab. This removes all NoScript protection for those sites, so use caution.