Davis Division Academic Senate

Request for Consultation Responses

Campus Email Committee Report

November 3, 2011

The joint Senate/Administration committee: Campus Email Committee has submitted its report recommending campus email system solutions. In spring 2010, the Davis Division reviewed a proposal for movement of faculty e-mail accounts to g-mail and noted several concerns. If committees reviewing the Campus Email Committee report wish to receive a copy of the Committee on Information Technology's 2010 review of the gmail proposal, please write to gina.anderson@ucdavis.edu.

Administrative Partners (DANN TRASK)

November 3, 2011 12:42 PM

Dear Professor Bisson,

      The L&S Executive Committee has reviewed the report of the joint Senate/Administration Campus Email Committee. While the Executive Committee members agreed with many elements of the analysis and subsequent recommendations in the report, a number of significant concerns were also expressed. Among them were:

- Confidentiality of the "cloud" (which most thought they would need to use);
- Compatibility with existing browser "front-ends";
- Retention of the ability to store (and easily access) one's own e-mail locally;
- Availability, adequacy and responsiveness of email technical support.

      The Executive Committee urges caution, care and consistent communication with and feedback from end-users and college/department IT technical personnel communities before (and during) implementation of a centralized campus email system. Other large-scale IT applications have seemingly suffered from unintended consequences. Given the degree to which email is central to the business of the campus, every effort should be made to ensure that the proposed changes are both necessary and will satisfactorily meet the varied needs of those relying on the system.

      Sincerely,

      Abigail Thompson, Chair
      Executive Committee
      College of Letters and Science

Council of School & College Faculty Chairs (AGRICULTURE)

November 4, 2011 11:48 AM

We support adoption of the report. We also agree that with the recommendation of the E-mail Committee that a joint campus units and administration steering committee be appointed to ensure that academic needs and administrative priorities can be met.

Council of School & College Faculty Chairs (MANAGEMENT)

October 24, 2011 8:47 AM

No response at this time.

Council of School & College Faculty Chairs (VETERINARY MEDICINE)

November 7, 2011 4:45 PM

Discussion within the School of Veterinary Medicine came to the conclusion that "strategically", this is a good move for the School and the campus, but some reservations exist. The School of Veterinary Medicine may have a larger number of faculty and staff computers than almost any other academic unit on campus. The campus cyber-safety policy requires our IT personnel to push out any security patches and/or vendor updates available which requires the School's network and systems administrators to have the appropriate system privileges. It is not clear to us how the same operation efficiency can or will be accomplished under this proposal. Furthermore, our IT personnel have written programs for the current system to facilitate the scheduling of classes. There is doubt as to how this capability and capacity would be affected with the new proposed system. In the aggregate, the School of Veterinary Medicine supports the proposal strategically, but tactically has significant concerns about how potential technical difficulties would be overcome without a serious disruption to the School's existing operations.

Elections, Rules & Jurisdiction

October 24, 2011 5:03 PM

No response at this time.

Faculty Welfare

November 3, 2011 11:36 AM

Submitted on behalf of the Academic Senate 2011-12 Faculty Welfare Committee Chair Stuart Hill.

Campus Email Committee Report

The members of the Faculty Welfare Committee appreciate the impressive amount of work that the recent report on improving the campus email system represents.   Email today provides the backbone of faculty communication and deserves no less. We also believe that the campus' highly decentralized and often unnecessarily complex email system could benefit from reform. In this era of diminishing resources and rapid technological innovation significant changes will soon be unavoidable. Yet, we disagree over the wisdom of the "hybrid" proposal that the Campus Email Committee (CEC) proposes as the best path forward.

The CEC argues that combining campus systems built around uConnect Microsoft Exchange with "cloud" services offered by Microsoft Office 365 and Google Apps would take advantage of the best options available to us.   The differences on the committee focused on the *cloud* portion of this proposal.   The critics argue Microsoft and Google would control important IT infrastructure and faculty emails and attachments off-campus.   Giving these vendors this key role raises concerns about whether we can protect the privacy of faculty communication. The campus would become dependent on the choices these external companies make about hardware and software that is no longer under the direct control of UC, Davis and its various administrative units.

A narrow plurality of the committee disagreed and view the move to the cloud as a positive development. The reduced cost for email services that Microsoft and Google offer is seen as an important benefit when the University must continue to adapt to declining state support.   The feedback from the students and faculty who already use gmail reveals high levels of satisfaction. Supporters of moving to the cloud, moreover, give less weight to privacy threats because email authors lack meaningful legal protections and should have no expectation of privacy. The anticipated hazard of Google warehousing emails would not alter the status quo.

The Faculty Welfare Committee's mixed verdict does not offer clarity about how we should proceed on this important issue.   But the judgments of our members on both sides of the proposal from the Campus Email Committee will hopefully serve to enrich the debate.

Information Technology

October 25, 2011 10:27 AM

The Information Technology Committee has reviewed the Campus Email Committee Report **and has completed the following response.**

General Comments: The UC Davis campus is probably ahead of other UC campuses in re-thinking its e-mail system. However, the proposed solution is similar to what has been proposed to update e-mail systems at other universities, namely a combination of local and cloud solutions, offered by Google and Microsoft. Specifically, the committee recommends three solutions: 1) Google Apps, which includes Gmail, named DavisMail for the occasion, but also collaborative tools, such as word processing, in the cloud; 2) U-Connect, based on Microsoft Exchange; and 3) Microsoft 365, a cloud version of 2). The Google solution is generally preferred by students and faculty, whereas the Microsoft solution appeals to those with heavy calendaring needs. It will not be possible to have both a Google and U-Connect e-mail address as one will have to choose. However, U-connect users will be able to have a Google Apps access (but not a GMail/DavisMail address). More details are available in the report. UC Davis (IET) will manage the proposed e-mail systems and monitor compliance with the contract specifications, including privacy clauses.

Recommendations: The committee recommends adopting this report. Nevertheless, there are several foreseeable issues that need to be addressed (unranked): 1) What will induce individual units to switch to one of the new systems? Of the ~100 systems in existence currently, how many will transition to one of the proposed solutions? In essence, how much money will be saved? 2) What is the implementation schedule or time line? Will there be user training and user feedback possibilities? Will there be regular user (faculty, staff, and students) oversight of the system? 3) Any privacy features in the three proposed systems – based on the contractual obligations of the two providers - need to be clearly explained to campus users and compared with off-campus solutions (e.g., DavisMail compared to regular Gmail) so that users can make a fully informed choice; 4) Will the University be receiving information from email and other computer service providers about the use of their services, and if so, what information will the University receive?; and 5) What measures are taken to safeguard existing e-mail during the transition to the new e-mail systems to avoid losses of e-mails?

To answer these questions, particularly the privacy issues, which remain a matter of concern, and to assist in the implementation of the recommendations of the E-mail Committee and CIT, we highlight the recommendation of the E-mail Committee that a joint campus units and administration steering committee be appointed to ensure that broad academic needs and administrative priorities can be met within this coordinated environment. This steering committee would take a lead role - with P. Siegel (Vice-Provost for Information & Educational Technology) and IET - in addressing the questions laid out in this CIT report. P. Siegel also indicated that the chancellor was in favor of such a process.

Planning & Budget

October 24, 2011 4:37 PM

CPB has just a few questions/concerns. We should preface by saying that none of us are terribly expert regarding email systems and so our few comments regard things that "caught our eye". We also focused on Google Apps and Microsoft office 365 as being the most likely candidate email systems.

1) The first is with regard to the stated storage capacity limit of 25 Gigabytes per individual. As we understand the document, this is the maximum amount for both the Google Apps and the Microsoft Office 365 possibilities. (We assume that in the case of Google Apps the 7.5Gb indicated in table 1, page 20 is not correct and that the 25Gb indicated in table 3 on p 22 is correct.)

25 Gb is certainly more than adequate for most users.

However, there are some faculty members who have been at Davis for many years (several decades or more) who currently use more storage for their emails than the above limit. If these faculty members were to switch to the Google Apps or Office 365 alternative and if they wanted to have just a single email system for both new emails and all of their past emails, how would this be handled?

We presume that any current faculty member with total email storage usage below 25 Gb could simply transfer all of their stored emails to the new Google Apps or Office 365 account if they wished.   It would appear that in Gmail there is a "mail fetcher" utility that provides this ability, but there may be some issues still with this Gmail utility since it is relatively new. We are not sure about how to do this in Office 365.

Of course, any existing faculty member who is currently below 25 Gb, could eventually exceed the 25 Gb limit as time passes. How would this be handled?   Could exceptions to the 25 Gb be requested and could one be certain that such a request would be approved?

2) The UCD/Gmail currently in place is proving useful to some faculty members as a means of separating their professional from their personal email. Presumably the possibility of having both a UCD/Gmail account and a regular Google Apps/Gmail account would remain.

Would the 25 Gb limit apply to each of these Gmail accounts separately?

3) After migration to the new system, there won't be direct access to a mail server, implying that pine/alpine/mutt won't work for uConnect.

Is this an important issue?   We know of a few people who do use pine for such access.

Research

November 3, 2011 9:04 AM

The Committee on Research reviewed and discussed the Campus Email Committee Report. There is no question that Geckomail is very dated, slow and not up to the requirements of this university. Therefore, COR agrees that change is necessary and timely. The three options (Microsoft Exchange, Microsoft Office 365 Cloud and Google Apps for Gmail) seem like sensible options. The incorporation of Microsoft Office 365 Cloud components seems to be a reasonable approach as it accommodates most of the popular platforms and allows for the integration of current Microsoft programs such as Word, PowerPoint, and others. However, the Committee on Research has two main concerns: (1) that the campus keeps the 'ucdavis.edu' identity, and (2) that security is paramount with regard to confidential material particularly concerning students.