Report on Activities of the Norman Campus Information Technology Council
Academic Year 2016/2017
Prepared by Patrick Livingood and Carl Grant

Overview

During this academic year the University dealt with an outbreak of phishing attacks and ITC heard reports from IT about the response and offered advice on their communication strategies. ITC also spent multiple meetings discussing the Acceptable Use policy that was passed in August 2016 and we have suggested ways the policy could be improved. The following report is on all of the major topics dealt with by ITC this year.

Phishing attacks and Security Issues

Starting in 2016 there was a massive escalation in phishing attacks against OU users and against many other systems around the world. ITC heard reports from OU ITs ongoing efforts to deal with these attacks.

In November 2016 one of the responses was that IT shut down its ASMTP email servers and required users that accessed email through third-party services like Gmail to use the office365 SMTP servers. The purpose was to remove one attack vector being used to distribute the phishing attacks. Unfortunately, this was never communicated to users, which broke email access for several days for some users. ITC asked IT to revisit their communication strategies for emergent issues.

In spring 2017, OU purchased access to ProofPoint. This is a cloud-based system to screen email being received by OU in order to detect and disable phishing, attack, and spam emails. In February 2017 the service was deployed for all users. ProofPoint has drastically reduced the number of phishing attacks seen by users. One concern raised by ITC was that messages may be blocked from users without notification. ITC representatives worked with Aaron Baillo in IT Security to test to make sure the false positive rate was low, and so far the tests have been encouraging.

ITC received a report from new IT Security head Ron Fellhauer in February on the rising danger of ransom ware. These are attacks that lock users out of their systems or data until a ransom is paid, and the attacks usually are initiated with a phishing message. The primary solution to both of these problems is to educate users about the danger of phishing attacks and how to recognize these attacks. Also, ProofPoint can protect against some forms of phishing that may be part of a ransom ware attack.

Antivirus Software

In Fall 2016, OU transitioned from licensing Sophos antivirus software to Dell Desktop Protection and Encryption (Cylance). The new anti-virus software uses a heuristic approach to identify malicious software, rather than signatures it needs to update and maintain. IT worked with Colleges and Units to manage the transition for users and largely issued communications about the change in anti-virus software through the CITL group. ITC discussed with IT Security concerns about relying on the units to be responsible for implementation and communication, especially since some employees are part of small units without CITL representatives and some larger Colleges had not notified their users of the change.
two or three months after Sophos was no longer updating. IT can track the number of Cylance users, and is tracking implementation rates.

Acceptable Use Policy

In August of 2016 the Security Governance Executive Council (SGEC) and Security Governance Advisory Council (SGAC) passed an Acceptable Use policy for the OU campus (the policy can be found at https://ou.edu/content/dam/IT/security/AUP_FINAL_Ver1.pdf). In 2017, ITC discussed the policy over several meetings and offered suggestions to SGEC/SGAC for revisions to the policy in the form of a memo sent in May 2017. Copies of the memo are available on request, and in brief, it makes the following recommendations.

1. ITC has deep concerns that some of the restrictive rules set forth in this Acceptable Use policy to deal with extreme cases could one day be adopted as best practice and desired outcomes. Although we think that current decision-makers involved in this policy are not interested in radically changing current practice, we are concerned that future decision makers could mistake these restrictions for desired outcomes. ITC knows that there are many other guiding policies and best practices that currently exist that are more student-, faculty-, and employee-friendly than one might discern from the text of this policy. Without additional context, many faculty, staff, and students may have justifiable concern when they see this policy for the first time that changes to current practice are going to be implemented.

For these reasons, we think that it is important for there to be an acknowledgement of the gap between desired outcomes and the rights and restrictions contained here. We would also like to see desired outcomes documented or communicated where possible to better inform the OU community and better inform future IT decision makers. One way to accomplish this is by systematically publishing and linking to existing or needed policies, such as the rules governing access to employee emails.

2. We suggest that the Preamble could be better phrased to express the idea that the larger network is something that we all use and to enlist the aid of the users to protect this resource. As framed, the preamble makes it sound like the users are the bad guys that the network must be protected from rather than people with a vested interest in the health of the system.

3. We have several comments on the text of the document. A provision in the policy would make it the responsibility of Department heads to inform their employees about this policy and to obtain assurances from employees that they will follow this policy. We recommend this type of education and compliance should be centrally managed. Other provisions could be read to prohibit leaving technical equipment unattended in the field for research or to penalize unknowingly introducing malicious software to an OU system. These passages should be clarified.
One Portal/Ozone Replacement

ITC received monthly updates on the development of the One Portal. Ozone, which currently serves as the University portal will be turned off in June 2017 and construction of the replacement began in earnest in 2016.

Work on the student-facing portion of the portal was done first. In late-2016, the One team built the advisor functions. Both of these were done with extensive consultation with users on campus. And in fall 2016 and spring 2017 the team built the faculty-facing part of the portal. The strategy with One is to develop and deploy a Minimum Viable Product, which implements the minimum functionality needed to achieve basic business goals. The team will then get user feedback to add to and improve existing functionality and then build onto the existing services.

In fall 2016, the portal team reached out to ITC for advice on building the faculty-facing part of the portal. ITC helped recruit and identify faculty volunteers to serve as advisors and testers. In addition to faculty user panels, the One team put together a faculty advisory group that included Patrick Livingood from ITC as well as Doug Gaffin, Randy Hewes, Bruce Mason, and Marielle Hoefnagels. The first version of the faculty portal will be publically deployed in May 2017. In June 2017, Ozone will be turned off, and One will be the default portal for all OU users.

Users should know that the One Portal is not replacing underlying systems like Banner or The Book. However, better user interfaces are being constructed and business processes are being reconsidered in ways that may, over time, replace the need to access some of these systems for some types of users. The development of the One Portal has been very collaborative and it is a model development effort for the OU campus for the future.

ITC plans to hear back from the One team in the fall on the roadmap for future development and features.

Canvas LMS/D2L

Transition to the Canvas LMS continued through this year and D2L will be shut down in June 2017. ITC received reports on the progress of this change.

Password Policy

In February 2017, the requirement for users to change passwords at least once a year was implemented. ITC heard reports on this effort multiple times over the year and made suggestions for the effort to communicate with users. The implementation went as well as it could be hoped. Most of the accounts that had not been updated appear to be orphaned group accounts. ITC advised IT that special attention will need to be paid to returning sophomores in the fall so the password reset does not adversely affect freshmen retention.

IT Audit

In January, ITC met with Tim Marley, who is the IT Audit Director for OU. Mr. Marley’s office performs IT audits, and ITC asked for more information about his office, the procedures it follows, and current issues
on campus that the Audit office is most concerned about. We learned that the office reports directly to the Audit and Financial Committee of the OU Board of Regents and to President Boren. The mission is to ensure compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and University’s policies. During an audit, the office meets with the leadership of a unit to develop a plan to ensure compliance. Currently, the leading concerns of the IT Auditors are those of effective risk management, compliance with legal regulations, and the management of cyber security risk. The office has specific concerns about very small IT shops across campus that are not large enough to have transitional roles and employees and may be under resourced and less structured.

Communication between IT Committees

There has been a proliferation of IT-related committees on campus. One problem with this is that many committees are not aware that the others exist, or that they have overlapping responsibility and effort. In response, Patrick Livingood compiled a list of 12 campus-wide committees plus at least six sub-teams. In fall 2016, this list was posted to the ITC website and was also distributed to the chairs of all of the other IT committees along with encouragement for increased communication.

Charge Document

ITC reviewed its charge document which serves as its charter. ITC was formed in the 1990s, and the committee felt the charge document was remarkable good for the current mission of the Council. Two small changes were recommended and approved by a vote of the ITC. These changes were approved by the Faculty Senate Executive Council on May 1, 2017. The updated charge document is attached to the end of this report.

1. In one section, there is a list of offices on campus that ITC should advise. At the time this document was created, the position of "Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer" did not exist. It should be added since much current ITC effort goes into advising central IT and the CIO (currently Loretta Early).
2. The old charge document had a provision about electing a vice-Chair. This has not happened in any of the years I have been on ITC and we have not been able to determine the last time it happened. We have edited the document to reflect current practice and the recommendations of the Faculty Senate to elect the chair in the spring before the next academic year.

Chair Election

Patrick Livingood was re-elected to chair ITC for the 2017/18 academic year. Carl Grant will remain in place as co-chair.
Charge Document for Information Technology Council (formerly Computing Adv.)

With edits proposed February 2017, voted and approved by ITC in March 2017, and approved by Faculty Senate Executive Committee May 1 2017.

Purpose:
The Information Technology Council (ITC) has the advisory responsibility for the policy and planning aspects of information technology and resources on the Norman campus. These technologies and resources include, but are not limited to the following: Networking; research and creative activity computing; instructional computing and technology, administrative computing; voice, video, and data communications; library resources and services; and analog and digital data storage, retrieval, and transport. The Council considers these technologies and resources from the lowest level of transport through their delivery and use, the degree to which campus audiences are both aware of and able to use them efficiently and effectively, and the budget decisions involved in their purchase and upkeep. The Council advises and makes recommendations to the President, the Senior Vice President and Provost, the Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer, the Vice President for Research, and the Vice President for Administrative Affairs. It solicits, receives, and reviews pertinent recommendations of other councils and committees. It provides for input from all areas of the campus through the creation of standing committees that deal with topics of general concern. It constitutes task forces to deal with specific issues or, through other formal reporting channels to respond to the concerns of administrative offices, academic units, and councils or committees. The chair of the Council shall also report regularly to the Faculty Senate and serve as an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee of the Senate.

In carrying out these responsibilities, the Council shall:
1. Formulate statements of general policy related to information technology and resources.
2. Recommend, advise on, and monitor progress towards long-range strategic planning for information technology and resources.
3. Recommend, advise on, and monitor progress towards the improvement of campus information technology literacy through the training of campus personnel.
4. Review actual and proposed changes in the administrative structures that support information technology and resources.
5. Serve as a forum for the interaction of campus service providers and their user communities by monitoring the various aspects of campus usage, and by periodically soliciting the feedback of users.
6. Undertake other activities it considers appropriate to foster and promote the effective and efficient use of information technologies and resources.

Committee Membership:
Membership: Shall consist of the following:
5 Faculty Members: Selected by the Faculty Senate and serving 3 year terms (terms to be staggered)
4 Members from the Administration: With 1 representative appointed by each of the following: the President, the Provost, the Vice President for Administrative Affairs, and the Vice President for Research.
3 Staff Members: Selected by the Staff Senate, and serving 3 year terms (terms to be staggered)
3 Students: 2 appointed by Student Congress and 1 appointed by the Graduate Student Senate, and serving 1 year terms with re-appointment allowed
VP of IT: Ex-officio and nonvoting
At the conclusion of each academic year the Council will elect a Chair for the subsequent academic year. At the first meeting of each year the Council will elect a Chair-elect to serve as Chair for the following year and as an aide to the current Chair.

History of Committee:
No history given.