



Information Technology Newsletter

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Feedback

Please provide any comments or suggestion regarding the newsletter to ITNewsletter@antioch.edu

Welcome to the first issue of the Information Technology Newsletter. In each issue we'll try and focus on a few topics of current interest rather than trying to cover everything that is happening in IT. In this issue we will be focusing on the roll out of Sakai as a learning management system, some of the changes being planned for Email, and the plans for transitioning off FirstClass.

Separately from this Newsletter, we plan to do an on-line survey of IT Satisfaction sometime next month. If you receive the survey we hope you will take the time to complete it - we need your feedback if we are to improve our service. This will be an annual survey so that we can start to measure changes over time.

The IT newsletter will be issued four times a year so the next issue will be in January 2009. We hope you find the newsletter useful and informative but we also welcome your feedback and suggestions to make it better.

Bill Marshall
CIO, Antioch University

Sakai Rollout



Antioch Sakai is ready for use by all AU campuses! Every fall term academic course site has been created and rostered with the appropriate students and instructor(s).

The processes for accomplishing this have been automated and the rosters are updated on a daily basis. The source information for this automation comes directly from Datatel and relies on the accurate input (and updates) of course, student and instructor data by local campus personnel. In a few more weeks, we will begin importing all the winter courses to give faculty the opportunity to begin preparing those sites for courses scheduled in the new year. You may notice that Antioch Sakai is now linked from many of the campus homepages, and is also accessible from the Information Technology website. Visit <http://sakai.antioch.edu> to find and utilize Antioch Sakai.

Also, collaborative project sites are being launched, as people are inspired to migrate existing FirstClass conferences into our Sakai system or have new project ideas that may use Sakai to facilitate discussion, the exchange of files, and other digital forms of communication and collaboration. Departmental & program worksites, an HR Directors' site, Seattle's Accounting office, and the

Two Hawks Quarterly publication from AULA are just a few examples of project sites launched in the past few days.

Instructional support for learning to use Sakai is developing rapidly as well. In October, several LIVE webinars were attended by AU faculty and students, a “Basics Manual” and “Getting Started” tip sheet are accessible for download, and an online, self-paced course is being built for those who will learn the system from a distance. We have also begun creating a series of multimedia tutorials that will provide up-to-the-minute assistance on specific tasks or goals that can be achieved in Sakai.

To request assistance in planning the rollout of Sakai on your campus, contact Daniel Tyger (Daniel.Tyger@antioch.edu). If you know of someone who would like to have project or experimental “sandbox” sites created, we only need to know the requested title of the site and the person who should be made the initial site “Organizer.” If you would like to schedule a Sakai webinar for your campus or program, please contact Wendy McGrath (wmcgrath@antiochne.edu) to set up a LIVE session where attendees will gain hands-on experience using Sakai during the e-workshop.

Sakai Request / Contact Information:

Sakai rollout / strategic planning: Daniel Tyger – (daniel.tyger@antioch.edu) or 937-416-2047

Instructional Sakai webinar requests: Wendy McGrath (wmcgrath@antiochne.edu)

Project or “Sandbox / Developmental” site requests: Harold Hale – (harold_hale@mcgregor.edu)

Sakai password resets: HelpDesk@antioch.edu or 866-662-0056

Email Address Format Changes

At present there are several different formats used for Antioch Email addresses and the addresses are spread across several different domains. We will soon be starting to standardize the format of Email addresses and to move them all onto a single domain namely - antioch.edu. This achieves several objectives. It will put us in a better position for our planned transition off FirstClass to another Email system, it will enable us to automate the management of Email addresses, and it helps to emphasize that we are all part of Antioch University.

The new Email addresses will normally be created by taking the first letter of a person’s legal first name and concatenating it with their last name. For example Jane Smith will be assigned the Email address jsmith@antioch.edu. There are some exceptions to this rule to take care of possible duplicate Email addresses, hyphenated names, etc. The complete document describing the format of the new Email addresses can be found [here](#). The document also describes the format of new User-ids and rules which will be implemented for stronger passwords. These changes will take place after the new Email addresses have been assigned and may be the subject of a future newsletter article.

We expect the new Email addresses will be issued to people over the next two to three months. This should be almost completely transparent since we will be retaining the existing Email addresses as aliases and any Email sent to either the new or the old Email addresses will continue to be delivered to your Email account. Even though your existing addresses will be retained as aliases we ask that once you have been assigned your new email address you start using it on any printed materials such as business cards or letter heads.

Transition Off FirstClass

We are starting to plan for the transition off FirstClass. The reasons for making this move are to provide a more robust and intuitive Email system, to transition to a system that fits better with our long term directions, and if possible to save money. There is a great deal of planning and preparation required before the transition takes place so it will not happen before the middle of 2009 at the earliest.

Before we can move off FirstClass we have to find alternatives for the various functions that FirstClass is currently used for. This can be broken down into several areas:

- FirstClass is used as the University's Email system. We have to select a new Email system (see next article) but we also have to clean up the number of Email accounts and the amount of storage used in FirstClass before we can convert to a new system. Of the existing Email accounts it appears that about half have either never been used or have not been used in more than a year and a half. There are also some accounts that are using a tremendous amount of storage which will cause problems when we move to a new Email system. In the coming months we will be talking with the responsible people about deleting unnecessary accounts and we will be instituting storage quotas on Email accounts. Click [here](#) for more details.
- FirstClass is also being used as a basic learning management system. We expect that this usage will be transferred to Sakai, the Learning Management system that has been selected by Antioch University for use at all campuses and programs. The article on the Sakai Rollout earlier in the newsletter describes the roll out of Sakai to take over this role from FirstClass.
- Many of the conferences in FirstClass are used for group collaboration. The collaboration project sites in Sakai offer a richer opportunity for on-line collaboration and some collaboration project sites have already been created in Sakai. We realize that some FirstClass conferences may not be suitable as collaboration sites in Sakai and we are looking at other alternatives for these types of conferences.
- FirstClass is also used for a variety of other functions such as Institutional Research (IRB), written assessments, and other uses. These other uses are currently being evaluated to find alternative to FirstClass.

We are still studying where to move many of the functions that have been developed in FirstClass and until this investigation is completed it is not possible to give a firm date for the transition off FirstClass. We would like to make the transition around the middle of next year – however this may not be possible because of the work remaining. We do know the transition won't happen before the middle of 2009.

Selection of a New Email System

Antioch University will be moving to a new Email system. This move may take place as early as July 2009, the exact timing will depend on how quickly we can get other functions moved off of FirstClass (see previous article). However we do have to make a decision about what email system we will be moving to. Some criteria for a new Email system are:

- A Good Web Interface. The Web interface will be necessary to work with a Portal, it will mean that we don't have to worry about end user PC configurations and installing client software, and it will make the email system more easily available from a wide variety of locations.

- System Features and Usability: Today's Email systems are typically mature enough that the basic features are available and fairly consistent across all systems. The evaluation team will therefore be concentrating on extended features that may not be consistent as well as evaluating usability.
- Support for Mobile Devices: Use of mobile phones for sending and receiving Emails is becoming more common and expected. The selected Email system must integrate with the most common portable devices.
- Directory and Authentication Support: Our goal is to move to a single sign-on environment and to have Email available within a Portal. This will require support for Active Directory (AD) and an authentication service.
- Administrative Capabilities: Simple to use administrative capabilities and the ability to delegate administrative functions as appropriate. This includes support for legal requirements as well as flexible backup options.
- Total Cost of Ownership: Since most mature Email systems are similar in their functionality a deciding factor may be the total cost of ownership including the cost of converting from FirstClass to the selected system, initial infrastructure costs for a new system, anticipated training costs, and ongoing operational costs.

Three Email systems have been shortlisted for evaluation: Google Mail – a solution hosted by Goggle; MS Exchange - hosted as 'Windows Live' by MicroSoft, and Zimbra – a Shareware Email system that can be run in-house or possibly hosted. These are all systems that are commonly used in higher education and appear to meet our main requirements.

The Evaluation Process

The evaluation will be led by Paul Deardorff; it will consist of two teams, an interface evaluation team and a system evaluation team.

- The interface evaluation team will be evaluating user experience, email functions, calendaring, and other tools. There are 29 faculty and staff from all campuses, including the PhD program on this team.
- The system evaluation team will evaluate the technical or system level features of the systems. This includes ease of installation, setup, and system conversion; system administration features; integration and interconnectivity with other systems; and total cost of ownership. Paul Deardorff, Sam Exel, Dan Tyger, Michael Capron, Bruce Friend and Arif Khan will be on this team.

At the end of the evaluation team members will be asked to complete evaluation forms on each system and we will try to find a consensus. The evaluation should result in a recommendation that will go to the IT Steering Committee and then to the ULC for final approval.

Project Timeline

The evaluation of the three Email systems will take place from now through early December. Once the evaluations are done we will target to get a recommendation to the IT Steering Committee by the first week of January.

This article is an overview of the evaluation process. More complete descriptions of the evaluation process can be found [here](#).