Google Apps for Education Recommendation

Submitted by Ellen Borkowski, Chief Information Officer
1-2013

Executive Summary

Information Technology Services (ITS) has investigated the Google Apps for Education environment as a replacement for our existing Microsoft E-mail and Calendaring systems. This investigation was prompted by the following:

A. A formal IT Security Assessment that concluded the current infrastructure of two separate computer domains (academic and administrative) should be combined to improve system efficiencies and infrastructure security.
B. The need to address e-mail, calendaring and information sharing issues which are caused by the current separate infrastructure. This infrastructure (the two separate computer domains and the separate e-mail/calendaring systems) results in the inability of faculty and staff to access and share calendar information and to collaborate with other information.

The solution for addressing this infrastructure issue is to combine the two computer domains and the two e-mail/calendaring systems. Merging our current domains and Microsoft e-mail/calendaring systems would require the expenditure of significant monetary and staff resources. As a result of identifying these costs, ITS began looking at potential alternatives. At the April 30, 2012 meeting of the Liaison Committee on Academic Computing and Technology, ITS began the discussion regarding its investigation of Google Apps for Education as a possible option for providing e-mail and calendar services to campus.

With a combination of e-mail exchanges, liaison committee meetings and participation in a faculty meeting, ITS identified key areas of concern and conducted research to address these concerns. This was an important process as changing a heavily used and important communication tool such as e-mail and calendaring will create some amount of anxiety, will require that users learn some new concepts, and will require significant technology support during the transition. There will also, however, be tangible benefits to the campus in terms of improved efficiencies, improved security, reduced costs, and more opportunities for faculty/staff collaboration. Additionally,

- The move to Google Apps for Education provides a one-time cost savings of $120,000 and an ongoing cost savings of $30,000 annually.
- Google provides 25GB of e-mail storage per faculty/staff while we currently provide only 2 GB. The web-based interface provides far easier accessibility to e-mail/calendaring.
- Future staff resources become available due to improved efficiencies allowing ITS to focus those resources on more critical and strategic Union College-specific needs.
- Google Apps provides new capabilities that support collaborative work among faculty, staff and students. Google is also a major player among technology companies and will continue to innovate in ways that will have major benefits to Union College in the future.
- Union College students are already in a Google Apps for Education environment.

Based on the above, I recommend we move to the Google Apps for Education environment.
**Investigation Process**

Based on the formal IT Security Assessment report received in early 2012, ITS began investigating the costs and resources involved in addressing the merging of our two domains. Because of the costs involved to merge these domains and the two e-mail servers on campus, ITS began looking at potential alternative solutions.

We found other peer institutions (those in *italics* are on our list of 32) who are already hosting faculty/staff in a Google Apps for Education environment include Albion College, Allegheny College, Beloit College, *Bucknell University*, *Colby College*, *Colgate University*, *Connecticut College*, Denison University, DePauw University, *Hamilton College*, Harvey Mudd College, *Haverford College*, Hope College, *Kenyon College*, Luther College, *Macalester College*, Manhattan College, *Oberlin College*, *Occidental College*, Ohio Wesleyan University, St. Olaf College, *Smith College*, *Trinity University*, and *Wellesley College*.

During May 2012, Ellen Borkowski, Chief Information Officer, emailed the faculty community, through the academics@union.edu list, asking for feedback on the idea of moving to the Google Apps for Education environment. The resulting discussion brought to light several concerns. Based on these concerns, two open forums were conducted to allow for additional information exchanges and to identify any additional concerns.

Over the summer of 2012, ITS staff investigated the issues/concerns raised via the e-mail exchange and open forums. Further discussions occurred over the fall term with the Liaison Committee for Academic Computing and Technology and an update was sent to the faculty via e-mail on October 16, 2012. Faculty concerns about security and privacy prompted an invitation from the Faculty Executive Committee for Ellen Borkowski to attend the October 23rd faculty meeting for continued discussion around this topic. Prior to this meeting, an open letter signed by 12 faculty was emailed to academics@union.edu on October 19th expressing “some main concerns about shifting email on ‘google apps for education.’”

Based on feedback from these multiple channels (Liaison Committee, e-mail discussions, open forums and open letter), the following concerns were raised.

- What’s the guarantee for free service?
- Does Google look at message headers?
- What is the back-up plan if Union College were to be cut off from our ISP?
- Are clicks looked at a holistic or individual level?
- Is there encryption in mail?
- What is the overall cost savings?
- What protections are in place at Google against subpoenas?

These concerns were researched and the following response was submitted to the FEC for distribution to faculty.

**General statement** - Union College owns the content. Any “examination” of content by Google is automated without human interaction. This is done both for security reasons and for personalization
of the user environment. For example, your interface to Gmail will start to auto complete contact names or terms that are used repeatedly. The Google Apps infrastructure is built and maintained by Google in accordance to industry standards. Their employees are trained on security and privacy procedures and policies and they have a zero tolerance for any breaches.

Answers to questions raised during faculty meeting

• What’s the guarantee for free service?

The Google contract provides a provision to renegotiate or amend the current agreement if Google were to institute any charges. It also gives Union the ability to leave the service at any time at no cost should we so choose.

• Does Google look at message headers?

Google does have access to message headers and logs for the purpose of email routing, reporting, and troubleshooting services. Google does not use this information for marketing or advertising purposes. Google Apps is a completely separate department with separate products and policies. There would be no ads of any type in Union’s core Google Apps services.

• What is the back-up plan if Union College were to be cut off from our ISP?

Union College has contracts in place with two ISPs so if one were to fail, the other would continue to provide services. The connection points to campus are located in the ITS Data Center and are supported by the generator in the event of a loss of power.

• Are clicks looked at a holistic or individual level?

Google scans or indexes user content in Google Apps in order to provide features that will directly benefit users, or to help Google maintain the safety and security of their systems. For example, email is scanned so Google can perform spam filtering and virus detection. Some user data, such as documents and email messages, is scanned and indexed to provide users with comprehensive search ability. Google Apps data is not part of the general google.com index, except when users choose to publish information publicly.

It's important to note that Google’s scanning and indexing procedures are 100% automated and involve no human interaction.

• Is there encryption in mail?

Union will be forcing SSL encryption for core Google Apps services: Gmail, Calendar, Docs and Sites. This means information will be encrypted while in transport. It does not mean that the email content will be encrypted while it is stored on Google’s servers.

• What is the overall cost savings?

There are one-time cost savings and recurring cost savings. Moving to Google Apps for Education will provide a one-time cost savings of $120,000 and an ongoing cost savings of
$30,000 annually. However, whichever solution is selected (moving to Google Apps for Education or merging the existing Exchange email servers on campus) there will be a one-time cost of $40,000 for merging the two domains on campus.

• What protections are in place at Google against subpoenas?

All subpoenas requesting Union College data would be forwarded to Union College. If Google is forced to give over data, Union College would still be notified.

There was also a concern about how Intellectual Property is handled in the Google contract. Through our legal counsel’s office, a lawyer with expertise in the area of intellectual property was asked to review the current Google contract and offer an opinion (located in Appendix A).

Conclusions regarding the implementation of the Google Apps for Education environment include the following:

• Email address will remain in the format of xxxxxxxx@union.edu
• No ads will be turned on
• “Conversations” view will be turned off as a default
• ITS strongly recommends using the web-based interface to the Google Apps for Education environment. (An Outlook Connector will be available for those who require it.)
• Students may need to be migrated from the @garnetmail.union.edu to the @union.edu domain to support the collaborative functions available

Recommendation

I recommend that we move to the Google Apps for Education environment. My reasons are as follows:

• The move to Google Apps for Education provides a one-time cost savings of $120,000 and an ongoing cost savings of $30,000 annually.
• Google provides 25GB of e-mail storage per faculty/staff while we currently provide only 2 GB. The web-based interface provides far easier accessibility to e-mail/calendaring.
• Future staff resources become available due to improved efficiencies allowing ITS to focus those resources on more critical and strategic Union College-specific needs.
• Google Apps provides new capabilities that support collaborative work among faculty, staff and students. Google is also a major player among technology companies and will continue to innovate in ways that will have major benefits to Union College in the future.
• Union College students are already in a Google Apps for Education environment.

The ITS staff has conducted some preliminary contingency planning for a transition to this environment, starting with administrative offices followed by faculty and students (if needed). Detailed plans for communicating, training and supporting the campus community through this transition are being developed so that implementation may begin as soon as a decision has been made.
Appendix A

Opinion letter from Attorney Brenda Ulrich regarding the Google Apps for Education Agreement
October 23, 2012

VIA EMAIL (CJAssini@HRBCLaw.com)

Charles J. Assini Jr., Esq.
Higgins, Roberts, Beyeryl & Coan, P.C.
1430 Balltown Road
Schenectady, New York 12309-4301

Dear Chuck,

You have requested, on behalf of Union College (the “College”) that we provide our views about any intellectual property risks that would be created by the College’s entering into the Google Apps for Education Agreement (the “Agreement”). In particular, you requested our view on whether participation in the Google Apps for Education program would give Google any intellectual property rights in any work created or owned by the College or any of its faculty members. After a careful review of the contract and proposed services to Union College, we would advise the College that this contract presents no significant intellectual property risks.

Under the Agreement, Google does not claim any license or rights to the materials being stored on its servers under the terms of the Google Apps for Education Agreement. Moreover, under copyright law, ownership of copyright in a work remains with its creator unless there is a specific written agreement to the contrary. Nothing in the contractual language conveys to Google any rights whatsoever in the intellectual property of the College or members of its faculty. Therefore, we see no realistic possibility that Google could claim or exercise any such rights.

We also do not think there is any appreciable threat to the privacy and security of data or documents hosted on Google servers. Google’s warrants that it provides the same security level for its customers’ documents as it does for its own documents. This warranty sets Google’s contractual responsibility to its clients for data security quite high and would provide substantial contractual protection to Union College and its faculty for the protection of their materials.

Regardless of whether or not the College enters into the Google program, faculty concerned with their intellectual property rights can easily and inexpensively register copyright in any particular works – whether published or unpublished – about which they have particular concerns. Such works might include unpublished manuscripts, computer software, and pictorial works. Similarly, the College can register copyright in works created by the College itself, including its publications and websites. Such registration in advance of any possible infringement can greatly strengthen an individual’s or institution’s ability to restrain infringements under the Copyright Act.

Please feel free to get back to me with any questions,

Sincerely,

Brenda M. Ulrich

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