

University of Idaho

Banner Cross-Functional Team

Thursday, December 11, 2008

8:30 am, SUB Cataldo Room

Present: Tom Valles, DeeDee Bohman, Dan Davenport, Shawna Lindquist, Lloyd Scott, Leo Stephens, Erick Larson, Debby Kolstad, Rod Dunn, Karl Riley, Chris Menter
Guest: Don Miller

MINUTES

- 1. SWANOSH reminder.** Chris reminded everyone that data should be entered on SWANOSH when a student indicates he/she is not returning for the spring semester. This is a mechanism to allow everyone to receive the information. She noted that both Housing and Student Accounts had just referred the students to the Registrar's Office instead of collecting the information. There was another clarification of noshow versus withdrawal, but it appeared for the most part everyone with comfortable with that area.
- 2. Email discussion.** Don Miller, VandalMail guru from ITS spoke to the team about the current email policy, account setup procedures, and future direction. Currently students use Vandal Setup to activate their three accounts—VandalWeb, Student Lab/Blackboard, and VandalMail. VandalMail is a Microsoft hotmail product that is 100% outsourced but can be kept indefinitely by the student. Currently in place is an hourly process to create a DNS account for newly admitted and/or registered students, although the PIN set process runs only nightly. The process to set the preferred email in Banner is run every 12 hours and all students, with few exceptions, will fall under the University Email Policy which requires them to use VandalMail. These timing issues can create issues when a newly admitted student receives communication to activate their accounts and try to do so the same day as the PIN is the first step on Vandal Setup. Karl suggested that possibly the process to set everything be attached to the admit process so that everything is created as soon as the student is admitted and an email could be sent to the personal email address as notification of this. Don noted that there is more processing power on the ITS side so that this should not create any load issues.

There are a few limitations and frustrations with VandalMail that Don noted:

- There is no reporting tool available so ITS is unable to tell if the VandalMail account is actually activated through Microsoft or if the user is access it. Un-activated accounts result in bounced "mailbox unavailable" errors.
- Accounts are not removed, but made inactive meaning they will not accept mail after 180 days if they have not been activated or 365 days of non-activity. There is a proposed change to extend the activation period to 365 days also which may take place in January.
- Accounts cannot be renamed so currently students must keep the abcd6789@vandals.uidaho.edu format for their address.

Don noted that the Microsoft Exchange Labs product has more enhancements than hotmail, which he has been testing for further consideration. However, those future decisions lie with Chuck Lanham.

Another part of concern was the bounces and how to deal with them. Don noted that ideally there would be some kind of verification process using Variable Envelope Return Path (VERP) which would filter the bounce-back emails to update email records or using some kind of images or icons in the email message that would require the reader to click to access further information making the ability to track the receipt of the email available. Karl noted that clicking could be a barrier to service if we are asking students to drill-down too many times to locate the information and they would just give up. It was also noted that if the student created some kind of a spam filter to catch University emails that the message would not bounce and appear to be delivered even though the student would never read it.

Questions about using outside marketing tools to send emails to students are acceptable. Don noted that these companies should be working directly with ITS to ensure that the emails are filtered through one of the three University servers which are white-listed with Hotmail and therefore do not consider messages spam. Leo noted that this would explain why his recent housing survey may not have made it to a number of students.

Dan suggested that a smaller sub-group meet after the first of the year to further discuss with ITS the usage and needs of VandalMail. Don noted that we do have to remember that the student user feedback has been good since they use the same password as VandalMail for all Microsoft Passport interactive products. Dan will solicit representation from each area.

The current student email policy is available online at:
<http://www.uihome.uidaho.edu/default.aspx?pid=25445>.

Next scheduled meeting: January 8, 2009—*tentative* (may be adjusted to February due to timing)