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New e-mail system being installed soon

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

As students, faculty and staff can attest, e-mail has become a critical tool for research, education and day-to-day business. To provide a more stable e-mail environment that meets the needs of the campus community and streamlines business processes, OU's Board of Trustees reviewed and approved a plan in December to implement a new e-mail system supplied by the vendor **MiraPoint**. Installation of the new system begins next week and will be completed by the first week in March.

"We reviewed many sources that analyze the reliability of e-mail systems when we made our selection," said Terrie Rowe, director of Information Technology. "The system by MiraPoint is up typically 99.99 percent of the time. It's an appliance designed specifically for e-mail, as opposed to a general purpose server that we'd have to try to retrofit."

The current e-mail system uses technology that dates back to the early 1990's. Components of the system have been upgraded over the years, but current and projected growth of usage combined with the need for reinforced security mandates that a new system be installed.

MiraPoint currently is training IT Department staff on system installation and support, including maintenance for e-mail and directory services server along with troubleshooting and problem solving, Rowe said.

"The hardware for the system has already been installed and initial conversion planning for all 22,000 e-mail accounts has begun," Rowe said. "The approval of the purchase of the new system by the president's cabinet and Board of Trustees indicates the ongoing support to implement quality technology solutions on campus."

The current system has been struggling to handle the current volume and service expectations of the campus community. An interim fix has been made to a failed RAID controller channel and dual failed disk drives. The RAID controller channel provides communications between the e-mail messaging server and storage device. Replacement parts are being shipped, and an e-mail outage of about eight to nine hours will be scheduled so the new controller can be installed.

For news on the status of the current system and implementation of the new system, check the **Information Technology** Web site by clicking the Info Tech button from anywhere on the OU Web site. The IT Department also has compiled a **New E-mail System FAQ** Web page, which gives more information on the MiraPoint system, including e-mail activation, access and reliability.

"We want people to review the FAQ page so they can be informed about the new system, and we'll continue to expand that page as we receive more questions," Rowe said.

The IT Department currently is taking steps to keep the current e-mail system operational, though overall improvement is not expected until the new system is implemented. In the meantime, there are steps individuals can take to help improve the current e-mail service across campus:

- Store no more than 100 e-mail messages in your inbox. Inboxes are not appropriate for long-term storage of e-mail, and services degrade as an inbox grows larger. For instructions on how to archive e-mail messages, contact the IT Helpdesk at (248) 370-HELP (4357).
- Keep no more than the last 30 days' worth of messages in your outbox. Though not accessed as frequently as the inbox, an excessive number of files in an outbox can cause system slowdowns.
- Avoid lengthy e-mails and large attachments.
- If you are an IMAP or Webmail user, do not leave your system logged into e-mail for lengthy periods of time.
- Set Eudora or Outlook Express to automatically check for new mail every 60 minutes. Checking more frequently can add to the overall degradation of e-mail performance.

"We appreciate everyone's patience as we prepare to make the transition to the MiraPoint system," Rowe said. "People should

know that the IT staff have become extremely frustrated with this situation, too, but we're very excited that the university is supporting this transition and we look forward to the new e-mail environment."

For more information, contact the IT Helpdesk at (248) 370-HELP (4357) or e-mail helpdesk@oakland.edu.

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