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Moving to a single standard for groupware

Submitted by:David Stone

1/29/2004

Question:

The President's Cabinet has authorized moving to a single standard for groupware and IT Services has selected GroupWise as the software to be used. Each faculty member will have a GroupWise e-mail account. Many faculty do not need to use the calendaring, task management and contact management features of GroupWise and prefer to use their current e-mail software (Eudora, Outlook, etc.).

Question 1 Will IT Services continue to make GroupWise accounts compatible with industry e-mail standards such as POP and IMAP?

Question 2 Will there be any penalties for those faculty who choose to use another e-mail software package?

Rationale:

A move such as this affects faculty in their daily work, but there was no faculty input on the decision to move to a single standard for groupware. The often-mentioned task force, which did include some faculty, had only one charge – select the particular software. As far as I know, the COBA faculty who have already been trying GroupWise have never been surveyed to see how they felt about its utility, ease of use, etc. The Novell demonstrations presented on campus consisted of “look at all the bells and whistles our wonderful system has”, combined with some “we can’t handle that yet” responses to many significant questions. But there was never an opportunity for faculty to say “I’m satisfied with the e-mail software I’m using – don’t force this change on me.” In a really bad budget year, this move to GroupWise seems very costly – new or improved server, the GroupWise 6.5 software itself, Novell technicians, many hours of IT Services’ staff time for installation and training, etc. This does not include the hidden

cost of hours of faculty time spent learning new software and the aggravation “cost” already being encountered of missed e-mail messages.

Senate Response:

An information request pertaining to GroupWise was referred to David Robinson (CLASS) to investigate and report on. Robinson (CLASS) noted that David Stone (COST) submitted the information request and wondered if IT services would continue to make GroupWise accounts compatible with e-mail standards such as POP and IMAP? Robinson (CLASS) reported that with GroupWise 6.5, any POP or IMAP compliant mail client can be used to retrieve mail from a GroupWise 6.5 server. Typical mail clients that GroupWise supports are Eudora, Netscape, Mozilla mail, Outlook, etc., so faculty can continue to get their mail in the manner they are currently receiving it. Stone’s (COST) second question concerned potential penalties for those faculty who choose to use another e-mail software package. Robinson (CLASS) opined that the only technical penalty for continuing to use POP with GroupWise 6.5 would be a loss of centralized automated storage and backup, which GroupWise provides. Users of mail clients supporting IMAP would suffer no disadvantage at all in this respect. Other technical penalties would include the loss of GroupWise’s address book integration, calendaring, and so forth. As far as administrative penalties, and these are hypothetical, in a previous memo concerning GroupWise the Provost stated that, “administrative staff will be required in the near future to use GroupWise and its use by faculty will be strongly encouraged/recommended. Although existing faculty may continue to use other messaging means...we hope eventually as new users are added the use of GroupWise will become more widespread.” This policy is reiterated on the GroupWise Migration Web Site, which states that all “all faculty members are encouraged to use GroupWise,” while noting that “campus technical support personnel will not support the use of other types of e-mail accounts or e-mail software.” So even though all faculty, administrative, and staff e-mail will be consolidated on the GroupWise server, faculty may request that IT Services merely reconfigure their existing mail clients to access their mail on the new mail server. The Provost’s stated policy of voluntary adoption would seem to preclude initiatives by academic unit heads to compel faculty to participate in Group calendaring, or other supplementary features of GroupWise. Robinson (CLASS) further noted that the decision for a centralized system came from the Level I Strategic Plan. A Task Force, led by IT Services Director Lisa Spence, selected GroupWise from among several competing packages. The license was acquired as part of the campus Novell license. The GroupWise Migration Web Site contains an FAQ section on the GroupWise Migration, as well as tutorials on how to use the new software.

9/16/2003: Stone (COST) queried the Provost's mention of Groupwise at the last Senate meeting and wondered if this was being accepted by the University. The Provost provided that Groupwise was recommended as the common standard for Groupware on campus. The University currently has six different communication systems that have trouble with interoperability. The President's Cabinet endorsed the concept that there would be one Groupware system and but stopped short of endorsing Groupwise. Nevertheless, that was the one the committee had recommended. The administration decided to take the current generation (version 6.5) to the campus to see if it satisfies their needs. Georgia Southern has an interest as we are a Novell campus, so Groupwise would be provided to us at the current cost to maintain our Novell network. Otherwise, it will be necessary to purchase a program on the open market which is estimated to cost ~\$100,000. Thus, the University has a stake in Groupwise in the sense that it has been recommended by a committee and would accrue a cost savings, but has not yet insisted that it has to be Groupwise. The decision will be made after receipt of campus input. Groupwise 6.5 is a newer version than exists on campus, with internet and other web capabilities which may have been an issue with some faculty. This is why the Novell people are on campus to have folks look at the capabilities. It is not a training session, it is a capability session that is being offered.