



Oklahoma State University

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OSU IT ready to repair the damage done

Mark Weiser, Associate Professor

Anyone who has been reading this paper, the Newspress, Daily Oklahoman, or Tulsa World knows that there has been a significant upheaval in OSU's IT Division. Two administrators were forced to resign after the press began to publish details of their illegal activities and a report of an investigation was released by the Regents.

Unfortunately, this came months after the very same verifiable facts were presented to President Schmidly and other administrators. Texas Tech administrators even verified hard-coded backdoors in the systems that the then TTU administrators used to control, yet these same people retained critical access to OSU system for many weeks following these revelations. Consequently, we now face significant audits to return our systems to ensure their prior level of security and functionality. Once done, we can turn our attention toward the improvements we all hoped for and expected when this IT administration, characterized by Dr. Schmidly as "walking on water," was hired.

Rather than act quickly to prevent further damage, Dr. Schmidly walked out of the aforementioned meeting, simply stating "I'm finished discussing this issue." It must be understood that Dr. Schmidly announced that he planned to bring this IT Division leadership over from Texas Tech even before an unbiased search process had commenced or a job vacancy had even been announced. Similar processes were followed for other administrators.

Since then, long-time, experienced, and underpaid management has been replaced by novices at significantly higher salaries. We have endured multiple unnecessary and extended periods of down-time, when e-mails and files could not be accessed.

Dr. Wiggins explained one such outage with the statement "I took a gamble and lost," even though experienced OSU IT workers had previously informed management that the proposed actions were doomed to failure. This particular outage caused me to send a runner to Dr. Schmidly's office with a printout of the reminder e-mail that had bounced back, identifying Dr. Schmidly as an "unknown user."

Recently, a diagram of e-mail routing was circulating as a joke among IT administrators and faculty – it was thought to be a spoof of IT management, even among some knowledgeable IT faculty and staff. Unfortunately, this turned out to be the actual plan for e-mail routing at OSU – a knee-jerk reaction to a minor problem that caused over a day of mail delays and down-time. This “plan” highlighted the technical immaturity of those responsible for running OSU’s system.

Because of the hostile work environment that has been fostered, multiple long-time employees have taken medical leave, hoping to recover, rather than resign.

The situation in many, although not all, departments is very unpleasant to say the least.

It is unfortunate that the administration chose to protect long-time colleagues, rather than expeditiously act on behalf of OSU. Luckily, the press and Regents are not so cavalier with our university. Due to their actions, two of the IT administrative group who have most adversely affected OSU systems are no longer employed here.

I understand the Provost has indicated a desire to restructure the committee system within IT to provide better guidance and oversight, and Dr. Wiggins has agreed to these changes, and to explain the mis-actions that brought us to this point.

I hope that there is a true intent to act in a responsible manner to return prior IT functionality and even move improve IT functionality at OSU.

I move forward with cautious optimism that recent positive actions are more than a response to the pressure of negative publicity, and hope that this will not wane as the spotlight moves to other issues.

I’m confident that the Faculty Council will do what it can to keep these issues under close scrutiny until both basic IT functionality, and faith in the administration are restored.