

Minutes

Kansas State University Faculty Senate Committee on Technology Meeting

April 15, 2003 - 1:30 p.m. - Room 205, K-State Union

Members present: Chang, Crow, Fritz, Haddock, Havenstein, Keithley, Montelone, Ross, Simmonds

Guests: Tim Ramsey, Roger Terry, Harvard Townsend

This meeting focused on IT security. It began with a report by Roger Terry, Chair of the IT Security SWAT Team, who summarized the work of the SWAT Team, whose complete report can be viewed online at the URL <http://www.ksu.edu/InfoTech/security/seureswat/Documents/index.html>

Terry stated that recent incidents of break-ins at other universities, which resulted in the loss of sensitive student and employee data, including Social Security number/name pairs, prompted the assembly of the SWAT Team. Their charge was to examine IT components across the University and determine how secure they were. The team found that the University has multiple servers running a variety of operating systems, with varying degrees of security, run by operators with differing levels of skill. This constitutes a risk to the University in a variety of ways summarized on page 4 of the SWAT Team report. Realizing that "Information security is everyone's responsibility", the team made a series of recommendations, listed on p. 5 of the report. These include establishment of a security organization (various names have been suggested) and a security incident response team (SIRT). The goal of the SWAT Team recommendations is to provide central leadership, cooperation, and a uniform level of training in security issues.

This initiative has been presented to the Council of Deans and to the IRMC. The IRMC has recommended to VPAST Unger that the SWAT recommendations are acted upon quickly.

Chang noted that the eID has improved security but presents an increased risk if it is compromised, since it will become the single means of authentication for most applications. Townsend agreed and stated that the long-term solution will be a digital certificate encoded on the Wildcat card, to be used in conjunction with a card reader at a workstation.

Harvard Townsend, Director of CNS, described recent steps that have been taken by CNS to improve security. An ad hoc group headed by Dr. Unger has been meeting regularly to deal with potential threats and improve security. The Iraq war raised particular concerns. An intrusion detection system (IDS box) is being tested and will probably soon be purchased. This device monitors Internet traffic coming into campus for multiple types of attacks and viruses. It can block attacks or notify CNS personnel. Townsend emphasized that this is not logging email or providing any information on its content - it is simply logging the flow of data.

Townsend addressed the question of the central mail system being able to provide more virus protection and reduce spam. For both of these, more central control and financial support is needed. CNS would like to be able to provide a service whereby the central mail server can apply heuristics to determine whether a message is spam and tag it, allowing an individual's mail client to be configured to direct the tagged messages to be put into a separate file or

deleted. This will not be in place by this summer. Other spam detection packages were discussed: the consensus was that none of those currently available are particularly good. Townsend reported that Mozilla and a new version of Pegasus will be able to do some spam filtering.

Tim Ramsey, InfoTech Security Coordinator, reported the results of some network scans he has done. One scan detected 314 SMTP servers that could deliver email. This was described as a disturbingly high number. There are more than 14,000 devices on our network, including over 1000 web servers. What these results indicate is that there are many openings by which attackers could gain access into the K-State system. This points out the need for more robust security and tighter, more centralized control of our information. Data security will continue to be an issue of concern and a focus of CNS's efforts.