



**Date:** December 8, 2010

**To:** Deans, Chairs and Directors

**From:** Jonathan Schaeffer  
Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Information Technology)

**Re:** University of Alberta and Google

---

I am pleased to announce that the University of Alberta will be moving forward with consolidating and centralizing its email systems.

On Monday, the university concluded a contract with Google to provide U of A faculty, staff and students the use of the **education edition of Google Apps**. This includes Gmail, calendaring and document preparation tools. It is our belief that moving to Google will ultimately have a positive and transformative effect on teaching and learning on campus. Implementation of the move to Google will begin in January using a phased approach beginning with voluntary migrations to Gmail, followed by centrally supported unit-by-unit adoption over several months.

The contract was more than a year in the making as the university worked to ensure the appropriate standards for privacy and security were included, which in the end we were successful in doing. Control of information managed through the contract is consistent with the requirements of the Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

The benefits of moving to Google are many. The move will simplify our campus information technology infrastructure by reducing more than 30 independent servers to a single system for all users. The Blackberry servers on campus will be consolidated into a single system. This efficiency will reduce costs. As well, the move to Google will allow for campus-wide calendaring and an improved emergency response system. The university can free up our valuable information technology people to spend their time on other technology priorities and initiatives that are central to the teaching and research mission of the university.

It is important to note that there are significant differences between Google's education edition and Google's general public offering:

- The university will retain @ualberta.ca email addresses (versus Google's public offering, which uses gmail.com addresses);
- Users will not face any advertising; and
- Google cannot undertake any data mining or share your user information with others.

In the New Year we will announce plans for a phased approach to moving all faculty, staff and students into Gmail over the next eight to nine months. For most people the changeover will be almost invisible and users will be able to continue to work with the mail tools they are familiar with (e.g. MS Exchange tools such as Outlook). For those who want additional features, users will be able to become fully immersed and adopt Google's web browser email interface, accessing such tools as chat, video calls, docs, etc.

As implementation proceeds, user groups will be provided with the information and support required, ensuring the switch goes smoothly. More details on that to come soon.

Throughout the process we will provide ongoing updates to the campus community via a webpage as well as regular communication through various channels. More information, including a **frequently asked questions and answers** section, can be found at [www.vpit.ualberta.ca/email](http://www.vpit.ualberta.ca/email).

Jonathan Schaeffer