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**Date:** April 8, 2010  
**To:** Deans, Chairs and Directors  
**From:** Jonathan Schaeffer  
Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Information Technology)  
**Re:** Gmail Status

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For almost a year now a team of technical, privacy and legal experts at the University of Alberta have been investigating the possibility of a single campus email system using Google's Gmail. Based on expectations that due diligence would be complete in a timely fashion, campus information sessions were held in September and January. However, the real world moves at a slower pace than expected. The decision to adopt Gmail has not yet been made. This memo is intended to update the campus community on the current status of the project.

There are four prerequisites that must be achieved for a positive Gmail decision to be made. Each is discussed in turn:

### **1. Technical solution.**

All technical issues on the University side have been resolved. Five pilot projects (roughly 250 users) in the Fall term went well.

### **2. University approval.**

At a December Executive Planning Committee (EPC) meeting, the decision was made to adopt Gmail on the condition that the privacy and legal issues were properly addressed.

### **3. Privacy.**

Email is, by nature, neither private nor secure. Gmail is at least as secure as the current campus email service, and arguably more secure. While in transit, email is often unencrypted and could be intercepted. You should always assume email is not private. This is true for all email services.

In December, a detailed, voluntary Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) was completed and submitted to the Alberta Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner (OIPC). It assessed the potential risks to privacy from moving data to Google servers hosted outside of Canada. In March, after their comprehensive review to ensure risks are thoroughly identified and accounted for, the OIPC accepted the PIA (they do not approve a PIA).



OIPC comments on the Gmail Project included the following:

"The PIA describes the Project in sufficient detail. The PIA also describes the assessment conducted by the University to ensure compliance with the FOIP Act, and the measures to protect privacy."

"Based on my review of the PIA, it appears that the University has made efforts to address privacy implications and to protect personal information."

"The public does not generally understand the risks inherent in email. It is not a very secure form of communication."

As part of their acceptance decision, the OIPC requested that we incorporate two information-dissemination initiatives into our plans:

- a) Inform University of Alberta faculty, staff and students what is expected of them to protect personal information, and
- b) Inform users that email will be transmitted to and stored on non-Canadian servers.

We have agreed to both conditions. In fact, both of these initiatives were already part of our plans (the second was included in our pilot projects).

#### 4. Google contract.

Negotiating the contract with Google has been the bottleneck for several months now. Google has not previously developed a Gmail contract that is compliant with Canadian law, so this is new ground for them.

Due to the complexity of the contractual terms and the schedule of the Google legal team, negotiation of the contract has taken longer than anticipated. We will not proceed with the roll out of Gmail until we are satisfied that the contractual provisions provide the University of Alberta with appropriate protection. The contract discussions are ongoing.

At this point in time it is hard to know when a final decision on Gmail—one way or the other—will be made. Information updates will be posted at <http://www.vpit.ualberta.ca/email>. If you have questions or comments, please use the "Ask a Question" option on this web page.

Please circulate this memo to all members of your unit.

Thank you.

Jonathan Schaeffer

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