

## Hamilton College

## HIGHER EDUCATION

Hamilton College, a liberal arts college in central New York, was already using Sophos Anti-Virus to protect its desktops, but faced a mounting problem with spam. After choosing Sophos PureMessage to secure its email gateway, Hamilton relied on Sophos Professional Services' PureMessage HealthCheck to ensure the rapid and worry-free installation and configuration of their new security solution.



Help Desk professional staff at Hamilton College (left to right): Scott Paul, Debby Quayle and Chris Forte.

## Business challenge

Hamilton is a liberal arts college with an emphasis on individualized instruction and independent research, and is a national leader in teaching effective writing and persuasive speaking.

Since 2001, Hamilton has successfully relied on Sophos Anti-Virus to protect its desktop computer systems from viruses, spyware, Trojans, worms, and other malware. Prior to that time, Hamilton was using a McAfee anti-virus product, but persistent problems with McAfee's Macintosh support, including being hit with the BIOS-decimating Chernobyl virus, led the college to search for a solution that would cover all bases. "We needed to provide the same level of anti-virus support to all our users regardless of the platform," says Debby Quayle, Director of Help Desk and Training at

Hamilton. "Sophos Anti-Virus for Macintosh has remained easy to install, stable, and reliable from the day we made the switch."

Hamilton is highly proactive in its anti-virus and anti-spyware efforts. Members of the IT team routinely provide classes on computer security and all students are required to use up-to-date anti-virus software if they want to use the college's network. In fact, the college provides Sophos Anti-Virus to students at no additional cost.

"We have noticed on more than one occasion that students using other products are not nearly as successful in keeping their computers virus-free as those using Sophos Anti-Virus", says Quayle. "We attribute this to the greater frequency with which their virus

## Key facts

### Organization

Hamilton College

### Location

Clinton, New York

### Number of users

Approx. 2,400 (1,800 students and 600 faculty and staff)

### Platforms

Windows, Macintosh, Sun Solaris

### Solution

Sophos Anti-Virus, Sophos PureMessage, and Sophos Professional Services PureMessage HealthCheck

*"Sophos Professional Services were just that – very professional and knowledgeable. They came prepared and were able to quickly deliver on the installation and configuration of Sophos PureMessage, which is what you want when going 'live' with a new product."*

*Dave Roback, Network Administrator, Hamilton College*

recognition files are updated and to the accuracy with which Sophos Anti-Virus identifies viruses and related threats.” While the college’s desktops, laptops and file servers are well protected against a wide range of threats by Sophos Anti-Virus, the college recently found itself with a growing spam problem. Throughout the academic year, Hamilton College processes approximately 1.2 million email messages every month, of which 45-50% are spam.

To combat this escalating problem, the IT team began searching for a gateway protection solution that could stop email-borne viruses, spam and content security threats at the network edge and within their internal email systems. “We had to get rid of the spam,” says Dave Roback, Network Administrator at Hamilton. “We were getting more and more complaints from users asking us to do something about it.”

## Technology solution

During their search for a gateway protection solution, Hamilton’s IT team used their test environment to evaluate an open-source product – SpamAssassin – and also did some research on various standalone appliances. The team’s main criteria for an anti-spam solution were the percentage of spam detected, ease of configuration for end-users, and the resources required to keep up-to-date with the latest malevolent spam techniques and virus outbreaks. After careful consideration, Hamilton chose Sophos PureMessage.

“PureMessage easily integrated with our SunOne Mail Transfer Agent (MTA), so no additional hardware was required,” notes Roback. “Its system administration was minimal – virus and



spam updates are very timely. Also, end-users have many configuration options to help them handle the spam.” To ensure PureMessage was deployed rapidly and optimally, Hamilton selected one of Sophos Professional Services – a PureMessage HealthCheck. During the two-day HealthCheck, a team of Sophos security experts assessed Hamilton’s current configuration and amended it to optimize throughput.

“We wanted to be certain that all the configuration options were correct before going live,” says Roback. “We also wanted to have a ‘live body’ close by in case we had any issues during the

installation and configuration. The HealthCheck also provided a chance to ‘pick the brain’ of an expert on how the underlying system works and what options would be helpful in our environment.”

## Business results

The PureMessage HealthCheck allowed Hamilton to rapidly install PureMessage and fully integrate it into their complex environment. “Within a couple of hours, we had agreed on an installation plan,” continues Roback. “After just a half-day, we had enabled the spam filter and watched as the system immediately began identifying spam and virus-containing emails. Sophos Professional Services team worked very hard with us before we went live with PureMessage. They spent significant time with us configuring our test environment and providing enhancements for our particular setup.” With Sophos PureMessage in place, spam-related complaints from faculty, staff and students have all but disappeared, resulting in a huge productivity boost for the IT team.

“When we first deployed, many people were impressed with the accuracy of the system and the ability to control and set up their own block/allow lists,” says Roback. “There was much positive feedback on how few messages ended up in their inbox. Since then, there have been virtually no complaints about the system. With spam, no news is good news.”

“After implementation, our tag and forward setup allowed users to segregate the spam messages and finally have a “clean” inbox. Users could still review the messages if desired, but most users have come to trust the system and ignore or delete the spam messages without review.” Along with the decline in spam, PureMessage has also sharply reduced the number of virus-containing emails, which has freed up considerable IT resources.

“The impact of the virus scanner was just what we expected – very few machines getting infected from email attachments, thus reducing downtime for users and support time for the help desk,” says Roback. Ultimately, Hamilton greatly appreciates having a unified solution that consolidates protection across all vulnerable tiers, avoiding the expense and uncertainty of integrating solutions from different vendors.

To find out how Sophos products can help protect your organization, visit [www.sophos.com/products](http://www.sophos.com/products), call toll-free 1-866-866-2802, or email us at [nasales@sophos.com](mailto:nasales@sophos.com).