

Wellesley College

HIGHER EDUCATION

Founded in 1875, Wellesley College is a prominent liberal arts college for women located near Boston. Faced with an increasing volume of malicious spam and virus-containing emails – which were taking a serious toll on IT resources and on the productivity of faculty, staff and students – the college turned to Sophos PureMessage to help them effectively keep up with spammers and virus-producing hackers without blocking legitimate email.



Business challenge

Since 1875, Wellesley College has been a leader in providing an excellent liberal arts education for women who will make a difference in the world. Its 500-acre campus near Boston is home to 2,300 undergraduate students from all 50 US states and 68 countries. Boasting a very low student-to-faculty ratio of 9:1 and an alumnae that includes Senator Hilary Rodham Clinton and former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Wellesley has ranked 4th among American liberal arts colleges by US News & World Report for seven out of the last nine years.

On an average day, Wellesley processes 60,000 email messages. Of those, as many as one-third, or 20,000 messages, are

identified as spam and up to 2,000 are found to contain viruses. Combating this unsolicited bulk email was time-consuming and disruptive.

“Viruses were running rampant, and we needed to stop them,” says Tim Cantin, Director of Systems and Networks at Wellesley. “Our users were frequently complaining, and even outside sources were complaining they were getting viruses from us!”

Significant resources had to be dedicated to sifting through the malicious emails, and the increase in mail traffic due to malware was wreaking havoc with delivery response times – wasting IT time and money.

Key facts

Organization

Wellesley College

Location

Wellesley, Massachusetts, 13 miles west of Boston

Number of users

Over 3,400

Servers

Sun Microsystems Solaris

Email traffic

Approximately 60,000 messages per day

Solution

Sophos PureMessage

“We believe Sophos PureMessage will continue to adapt to our needs in the future. We’re in it for the long run, and we expect our vendors to do the same.”

Tim Cantin, Director of Systems and Networks, Information Services, Wellesley College

Technology solution

Before implementing a technology solution, the Wellesley IT team evaluated five anti-spam and anti-virus products. Ultimately, Sophos PureMessage was chosen for its flexibility and ease of configuration.

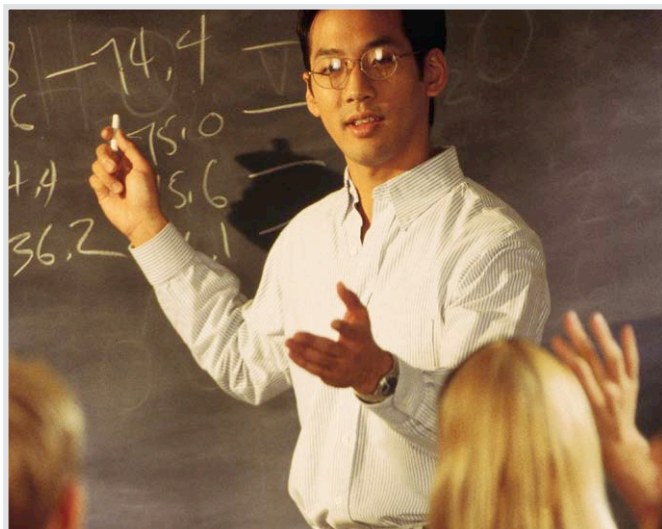
“The other solutions were much more complex,” notes Cantin, “and we didn’t have the staffing resources to throw away trying to get them working and reconfigured when changes needed to be made. In one case, we purchased a competitor’s product, and returned it for a full refund after determining that it was not a viable solution for several reasons.”

Cantin describes the PureMessage implementation as “quite favorable”. “The anti-virus component was already a great success,” he notes, “and adding the anti-spam and additional stability, including a hardware upgrade that helps deliver mail more quickly and eliminate backlogs, just made the whole experience extremely positive for us – and the system very useful for our users.”

Business results

With Sophos PureMessage in place, Wellesley’s computer users have experienced a notable reduction in mail traffic, which has benefited the overall health of the IT system.

“The amount of mail traffic has been reduced by a significant percent, greatly saving system resources,” says Cantin. “This leaves more CPU cycles for the delivery of valid emails. We were having problems with delivery response times, and this has now been cured.”



With fewer users receiving virus-containing emails, gains in IT productivity have also been significant. Cantin estimates that, before PureMessage was implemented, “up to an hour per employee per week was spent sorting through bogus emails.” With a staff of 50, the time saved is considerable.

When asked if he would recommend Sophos security solutions to his peers, Cantin answers without hesitation: “Absolutely – and in fact, I have. I gave a presentation to NERCOMP* in June of 2004 at which I talked about our PureMessage implementation to peer institutions.”

Along with the much needed relief from time-consuming, disruptive and dangerous spam and viruses, Cantin appreciates PureMessage’s ease of configuration, particularly the fact that it can be easily configured via an HTML interface, and its flexibility.

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* New England Regional Computing Program – a regional academic and educational association promoting IT best practice.

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