

Eight Things You Should Know about IAM: The Central Person Registry

What is it?

A centralized person registry is a directory or database that consolidates identity information currently stored in separate and non-integrated sources throughout the University. Integrity rules would be applied that would ensure the validity of the identity data---resulting in a complete and up-to-date person record for each individual University member or affiliate.

Who's doing it?

A campus wide governance group was put into place December 2009. They are sponsoring the overall IAM Project. ITS is collaborating with stakeholders around the University to develop requirements for the Central Person Registry, implement the services and integrate them into existing business processes.

How does it work?

The first step in building an IAM infrastructure is to review the data distributed across the campus about people, decide what's relevant from the source systems, and consolidate and update the information into one identity entry for each person in the community. So if a person has entries in financial aid, student, and human resources systems, that relevant identity data would be extracted as needed, matched up and maintained in one digital identity record in the Central Person Registry..

Most people won't directly use the Central Person Registry. However the data stored within it will be accessed by Penn State's online services needing access management information. In addition, departments that orient faculty, staff, students, and other individuals with relationships with the University will use it to create accounts for the them.

Scenario

A new student applies for admissions online using their Facebook credentials in the early spring.

They receive e-mail confirmation that they have been accepted and are asked to use their Facebook credentials to verify their intention to attend.

The University then sends them information on housing, the First-Year Testing, Consulting, and Advising Program (FTCAP), and other required activities.

They can sign up for FTCAP, but cannot access housing until they have paid their enrollment deposit.

Once the deposit is paid, the new student receives information about their new Penn State Access Account.

The new student is sent a URL with a one-time activation code to get their Penn State user ID and set their first password and related password-reset questions.

They can now access the housing application.

Once they arrive on campus for FTCAP, they receive their ID card.

They also present a photo id to verify that the physical person standing before the Penn State staff member is indeed tied to the identity and student record the institution has on file for them.

Why is it significant?

Identity and access management (IAM) ensures that the right people access the right services. In the past, this was implemented system by system with duplicate identity data distributed across the University, across all Penn State locations. Add another service and you add the identity infrastructure to go with it. Now try to manage the distributed security issues associated with these duplicate identity stores and you have quite a challenge.

The solution is to use the same identity information service for all your applications that:

- Enables consolidated implementation of policy.
- Provides the ability to enforce compliance rules in one spot.
- Reduces duplicate data stores.
- Provides for tracking of security features such as credential strength will be required by the Federal Government and financial sector.

What are the downsides?

Currently, data about individuals are stored in different source systems. The upside is that a compromise in one system doesn't imply access to another. Since the Central Person Registry consolidates access information in one spot, its security is very important. If compromised, access management in systems that use the information could also be compromised.

On the other hand, because the functions of access management are consolidated, it's much easier to track break-in attempts and potential security issues across the systems that use the Central Person Registry. In addition, because it is such a critical component of our online systems, the University employs professionals who specialize in IAM and are dedicated to managing this critical asset and working with the campus to keep it running smoothly and securely.

Where is it going?

Currently, ITS is deploying the Central Person Registry with enough information to replace the several systems that are in place today. Longer term, it will contain additional features (such as the tracking of credential strength) and accommodate new services and data requirements.

What are the implications for Penn State?

Identity and Access Management begins with people and their relationships (or affiliations) with the University. Many types of individuals have relationships with the University and the subsequent need to access online resources. Some of these relationships are obvious, such as student, faculty, and staff, but others are less so, such as patient, volunteer, supplier, and independent contractor, or with those who may never physically set foot on a Penn State campus.

The University environment is also a dynamic one, where these relationships as well as responsibilities and the rules of engagement are constantly evolving. Prospective students become enrolled, may withdraw, or eventually graduate. Enrolled undergraduate students may change their respective campus locations or majors or graduate and become graduate students.

Full implementation of a single person registry at Penn State is crucial to enabling this change in a person's relationship with the institution, because it is key to ensuring the accurate and timely provision of access. Not only does service and productivity suffer when systems do not keep pace with evolving affiliations and responsibilities, but the University's valuable digital assets can be put at risk.

Where do I find out more information?

More information is available via the IAM Community Web site at <https://iam.psu.edu/>.