Modernizing Systems, Processes, and Identities at UC Merced

As the newest campus in the University of California system and the first US research university built in the 21st century, it's hard to imagine such a new institution grappling with the effects of an aging infrastructure and identity platform. The world was a different place in the early 2000s when UC Merced was emerging from a former golf course in California's San Joaquin valley - resources and budgets were (relatively) plentiful, Sun Microsystems was throwing dirt-cheap hardware and software at higher-ed institutions across the country, and "the cloud" was still a weather phenomenon rarely seen during the summer in interior California. UC Merced, like many institutions at the time, invested heavily in local computing capacity with racks of purple computers running Oracle databases, Sun Identity Manager, and ~~Netscape iPlanet Sun ONE~~ Sun Java System Directory Server.

Time marched on, budgets got lean, and Oracle swallowed Sun, leaving UC Merced with no clear path forward to turn its purple data center into something that could continue to support the needs of a rapidly growing research university. Over the years, various efforts to replace the identity management system sputtered and stalled, hardware continued to age, and support for Sun's Identity Manager dried up. Sensing an opportunity to right the ship and contribute to the community at large, UC Merced became a TIER investor campus in 2015 and developed a multi-year IAM roadmap with the ultimate goal of adopting TIER.

Work on an interim solution set off immediately, converting ~10,000 lines of Waveset XPRESS business logic code to Java and retiring the Sun Identity Manager for a homegrown, interim solution. A front-end web application was created in Angular for account management and self-service. Through participation in the TIER Campus Success Program, UC Merced hopes to build on that momentum and replace our interim solutions with midPoint and Grouper.

UC Merced has been working on project planning and securing the resources and talent necessary to pivot towards TIER, containerized apps, and the devops model. To that end, all of you devops engineers looking for an exciting opportunity in the UC system can contact me directly! Our identity and operations teams have been heavily impacted by another project, replacing the University of California's 35+ year old payroll system. Work on that project wraps up this month and the team is looking forward to making significant progress on midPoint and Grouper in 2018.