

Getting over the Hump with Grouper at Illinois

Prior to our participation in the TIER Campus Success Program, the University of Illinois Identity and Access Management team had been working to deploy Grouper as a campus-wide authorization solution, branded locally as "Authorization Manager", or "AuthMan" for short. AuthMan was marketed on our campus as a solution for centrally managing authorization policies and quickly drew the interest of departments and service/application owners alike. In addition to work on Grouper, our Shibboleth IdP was slated to move to the cloud as part of a cloud-first initiative to migrate many of our central IT services to Amazon Web Services. Our team decided to shift gears with Grouper and deploy it in Amazon Web Services as well to align with this cloud-first initiative. This created a bit of a reset in the project, as we had a new deployment model and process.

In addition to deploying these two services in the cloud, we are also working on migrating our primary LDAP infrastructure to the Active Directory. The University of Illinois has many applications behind Shib, but our Shib IdPs have been using a secondary LDAP as its data source due to Active Directory constraints. Because of the cloud-first initiative and continuing work to consolidate redundant services, we're also working on making the AD our authoritative source of data for both Shib and Grouper. This requires some schema and policy updates to our AD to accommodate FERPA-suppressed users as well as making sure all necessary attributes are correctly mapped in AD.

Over the past month, we've been working on migrating our Shib IdPs to a dockerized TIER package hosted in Amazon Web Services, and have developed a plan to implement shadow attributes in AD to handle FERPA-suppressed users. We needed to resolve some logging dependencies with Shib, and we've used Splunk as the solution. In addition, the AD schema changes are slated for early spring. We're also preparing a dockerized Grouper TIER image for deployment in Amazon Web Services. We are looking forward to working with peer institutions to help us "get over the hump" of learning Grouper and sharing our own experiences with deploying on AWS.