System IT Board Report
February 8, 2023

Microsoft 365 Consolidation Project

Microsoft 365 is a suite of productivity software, collaboration, and cloud-based services owned by Microsoft. It encompasses online enterprise services such as OneDrive, Microsoft Teams, SharePoint, Exchange Email, Yammer, Endpoint Manager, and Defender Security. It also includes applications formerly marketed under the name Microsoft Office, which include applications such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, OneNote, and Outlook for Windows, MacOS, mobile devices, and on the web.

Our students were the first to use Microsoft 365, when in 2010 it was provided by Microsoft for student email. In 2013, Microsoft began providing it to the rest of the colleges and the system office. Although it was implemented by each institution at varying levels, it was primarily used for services like OneDrive and SharePoint. Later, Microsoft Teams and other services were added, including features like real-time file collaboration and the Office apps on the web.

Unfortunately, because Microsoft had provided the suite individually to each institution and to all our students, this created technical barriers that prevented the full use of the products. Faculty could not easily share files or collaborate with students. They could not use features like OneNote for the classroom or use integration features within D2L. Staff could not easily share SharePoint sites or use Microsoft Teams effectively, while other features and services were not available at all due to staff email residing on-premises Exchange servers and not in Exchange for Microsoft 365.

In 2021, based on independent research and technical consultation, the decision was made to consolidate each of the 13 college and student Microsoft 365 environments into a single environment, including our staff on-premises Exchange email. The consolidation project was created, and work began.

After months of planning and preparation, in December of 2021, NJC became the first college to be migrated to the shared Microsoft 365 environment. After the holiday break work resumed and from January, 2022 until the end of June, 2022, the remaining 12 institutions were migrated to the shared environment. In total, more than 19,000 accounts, 90 Terabytes of data, 5,000 Microsoft Teams sites, 4,000 SharePoint sites, 20,000 mailboxes, and 12 Terabytes of mailbox data was moved from each college environment and from on-premises Exchange to the shared environment. Six more months of planning and preparation culminated in the migration of approximately 500,000 student accounts, along with 32 Terabytes of additional data in January of 2023.

While operating in a shared Microsoft 365 environment presents new opportunities it also introduces new risks. The highly integrated nature of this new shared environment also means that changes can ripple quickly through all operating environments and affect user experience and critical functionality. To help mitigate these risks and ensure intentional, thoughtful consideration, along with collaborative planning, a systemwide Steering Committee and Change Advisory Board were created. The Steering Committee was established to guide the IT staff responsible for administering the shared Microsoft 365 environment and focuses on global impacts and standardization. While the Change Advisory Board

focuses on assessing, approving, prioritizing, and ensuring communication of proposed changes to the shared Microsoft 365 environment prior to a change being implemented. With representatives from every institution in the system, these groups have been operating effectively since January, 2022.

Since the completion of this project,

- File collaboration by faculty and staff with other faculty and staff has increased from just over 300 files shared each month in February 2022, to more than 1,000 per month in December 2022.
- In January 2023, with the students added, more than 2,000 files have been shared internally.
- More than 30 million files have been added to the environment.
- Microsoft Teams meetings has grown from just over 500 to more than 1,600 per month.
- More than 192,000 chat messages are being sent via Microsoft Teams each month.
- In January 2023, more than 5 million e-mail messages were received.
- Integration with D2L has improved and faculty are able to take advantage of additional features.
- Faculty are now able to use the much-requested OneNote for the classroom.
- Faculty are now able to easily use and integrate Microsoft Teams into their courses.