**We're Going to Ask You to Change Your MUnet Password - Here's Why**

Beginning later this semester, Miami web-based services that require authentication will "catch" those who log in with a default MUnet password and ask that the password be changed to another value. For now, the password change is voluntary; beginning in February, 2003, the password change will be mandatory—that is, you will not be able to use Miami services until the password is changed to another value.

**What is a default password?**

Default passwords are those that are automatically assigned when the account is created. The value of the default password is mmddnnnn - that is: month and date of birth + last 4 digits of social security number. Review the Knowledge Base article on [UniqueIDs and MUnet passwords](#) for additional details.

**What reason is there to change from the default value?**

Miami University’s auditor monitors security practices and procedures to ensure that Miami is doing business in the most secure manner possible. The auditor has issued an official comment that the MUnet password is not as secure as it could be. The reason for this is twofold: birth dates are very well known and, although we would all like to believe that social security numbers are not well known, some agencies and commercial entities still request SSN for identification purposes and they are printed on many documents.

The best security practice is to require that people change from the default value and choose another password that is more secure.
How do I choose a good password?

The best password is one that is a random combination of numbers and letters; unfortunately, such a password is difficult to remember (and writing down a password is not good practice). You must balance the need for obscurity with the ability to remember the password that you choose. The 'Choosing a Password' Knowledge Base article lists the important points to remember; one key point is to avoid personal details about yourself that are easily guessed (don't use the name of your favorite band, child, etc.).

What if I forget my new password?

There are several things that you can do if you forget your password:

- Create a Secret Question: when you change your password to a new value, you will be asked if you would like to create a Secret Question/Answer. If you have a Secret Question/Answer on file and you later forget your password, you can answer the Secret Question and choose a new password. Because there are times when support staff are not available to assist you, it is strongly recommended that you create a Secret Question/Answer so that you can immediately help yourself if you forget new password.
- Visit the Support Desk: if you do not create a Secret Question/Answer and you are unable to remember your password, you will be required to go to the MCIS Support Desk (regional campus clients can also visit their technology support centers) and present a picture ID. When your identity has been confirmed, support staff will reset your password to the default value (and you will be required to change the password to a new value at first log on to a web-based service).

Review the Knowledge Base articles on this subject or contact the Support Desk at supportdesk@muohio.edu or (513) 529-7900 for further assistance.

Announcing the New LISTSERV Pages

Many of us participate in more than one electronic mail list, or LISTSERV. We talk electronically with colleagues about projects, problems, new information, etc. Often someone subscribes us to a list and we take the technology for granted, except perhaps when at an odd moment we forget that our posting goes to the whole list!

There are a lot of features to a LISTSERV, both for subscribers as well as managers. For example, as subscribers we can join or leave a list ourselves, change our passwords, find out what lists we are subscribed to, or just temporarily stop delivery of messages. Managers or owners of lists can create lists, add subscribers and control all sorts of functional options.
Some of us may not even know all the options we have and, until recently, it has not been so easy to find the information we need. As of November 13th there is a new LISTSERV web page that will help sort out LISTSERV options and functions.

To view the page, go to http://www.muohio.edu/listserv/ and you will see a totally new format for the previously diffuse information. It is now organized by whether you are interested in LISTSERV as a subscriber or as a list owner. All the functions for each type of person are detailed in the "How do I?" sections. The information is actually an organized compilation of Knowledge Base cases. There are also new forms linked from each section allowing you to perform functions with instructions at each decision point.

Setting up a LISTSERV, for example, has never been easier. It is an online process where you enter all the information required and also make decisions about how you want the list to work. You can choose to moderate the list yourself or allow the participants to see and respond to all the postings themselves. You may choose to go with many of the default options or you may choose to change them.

Please let us know in the MCIS Support Center how you like these new pages and if you have suggestions for us to make them even better and easier to use. "I wish I were able to....." would be one way of sending us feedback.

Send your feedback to Peggy Sander, Manager of Administrative Support, at sanderm@muohio.edu.

Viruses Are Hazardous to Your Computer's Health (and Your Files) — Protect Your Computer!

Haven't seen a virus alert lately? Think viruses aren't really a problem? Think again . . .

While you may only periodically see widespread virus alerts in the news media or at Miami, computer viruses are a constant threat and a constant problem:

- The security team at Miami receives reports daily from non-Miami sites that are being impacted by computers on Miami's campus. The computers causing problems have, in almost all cases, been compromised by a virus or Trojan.
- During October of 2002, the virus scrubbers on Miami's e-mail servers detected and cleaned/removed viruses from 125,690 e-mails.

Viruses can potentially render your computer unusable, delete or corrupt your files, use your computer to send your files and/or the virus to others, and flood Miami's network with traffic, making network performance poor for everyone.
While the virus scrubbers used by Miami's e-mail servers have helped to lessen the damage done by viruses on Miami's campus, they address only one of many ways viruses can be spread:

- Through e-mails delivered by e-mail servers other than Miami's
- Via instant messaging software
- By simply being connected to a network or the Internet
- Through portable media like floppy disks, Zip disks and CDs

To protect your computer, you must:

- Install and run virus protection software on your computer
- Regularly update the virus definition files your virus protection software uses

As the end of the semester approaches, please make sure you've taken the necessary steps to protect your computer from viruses. Don't lose time and critical academic work because of a virus.

If you don't already have virus protection up and running, visit the Virus Protection Software information in the MU Knowledge Base for instructions on installing and updating the McAfee virus protection software Miami has site-licensed for use by all faculty, staff, and students.

Changes to myMIAMI

myMiami (<http://mymiami.muohio.edu/>) was launched in May, 2001, as a web portal for all Miami University students, faculty, and staff. So far, myMiami has been a very successful project with peaks of 13,000 people per day using the service which includes web-based e-mail.

During the summer of 2002, myMiami was upgraded to a new version of the software in order to resolve problems in the previous versions. This upgrade appeared successful until the semester began and use of the service increased. The service was unavailable many times during the first six weeks of the semester and MCIS worked with the vendor to remedy the problems with little success.

Due to the critical nature of the system, MCIS decided to take drastic action and replaced the software underlying myMiami with an MCIS developed solution. This solution was put in place one week later and has been extremely reliable.
MCIS is now investigating future directions for the myMiami service. Over the next several months, MCIS will be rolling out enhancements to the myMiami service. In addition, we will begin developing the next generation of myMiami that we hope to begin previewing in the Spring and release to the general public in the Summer of 2003.

Blackboard Status

Blackboard (http://blackboard.muohio.edu/) continues to be a very successful service for Miami University. This semester, over 700 Blackboard sites have been created to support courses and other functions at the university. In addition, the Miami University Residence Halls have joined many other organizations using Blackboard to disseminate information.

As the Blackboard system has grown, MCIS has been challenged to provide the resources needed to meet demand. For example, the load on one of the servers responsible for providing the Blackboard service tripled compared to the previous Spring semester. MCIS has performed several upgrades on the system to meet this demand and we continue to monitor this situation closely.

Over the December break, MCIS intends to upgrade the Blackboard software. MCIS is currently evaluating the exact nature of this upgrade and is working with current users of the Blackboard system to determine the best course of action. We will set up a test server soon for faculty to begin experimenting with this new version of the software. Watch your e-mail for details.

My Document Is Damaged!! Can You Recover It for Me?

As the semester nears its finish, students of all disciplines are completing final papers and projects. Hours of hard work have gone into these papers, but many students rely on the flimsy piece of mylar that is inside 3 3/4" floppy disks to store this precious work. Others will use zip disks, and many will use their personal computer's hard drive.


The loss of a term paper can be devastating. Each semester the Support Desk does its best to assist distraught students who bring in their damaged floppies in hope of a recovery. The Support Desk has tools that can sometimes recover lost data. Often students have not made a backup of these critical, final documents and, if the damaged document is not recoverable, they have no recourse but to start over.
Making backups can save much time and frustration. Important files should be saved to multiple locations--two copies on the same piece of media are not sufficient for this purpose. See the Knowledge Base case for examples of appropriate locations.

Universal Disk Space (UDS) is a very good choice for primary storage or backup storage. Please consult the Knowledge Base at http://kb.muohio.edu/ and search on "UDS" to view the many articles on UDS use.

Contact the Support Desk at supportdesk@muohio.edu or (513) 529-7900 for further assistance.