



UMRA SAVES FITCHBURG VALUABLE TIME WITH AUTOMATED ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT

Fitchburg State University, founded in 1894, was the first practical arts teacher training program in the country and has since grown to more than 30 undergraduate and 22 master's degree programs. Located in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, the school has a population of over 6,500 students and 520 employees.

After several attempts to delete inactive users, the university's administration inadvertently deleted hundreds of active user accounts. That's when they realized they needed help. "We weren't able to integrate the Active Directory information with the student record system to accurately report information," said Sherry Horeanopoulos, Information Security Officer at Fitchburg State University.

When the university realized that the way they managed user accounts and cleaned up their directory was inefficient, they started looking for help. Most options they evaluated were costly and complicated. "UMRA from Tools4ever was a really easy solution, and the support was phenomenal," stated Sherry. The school also decided they were switching from a local student email server to Gmail, and Tools4ever was one of the few companies that supported Gmail.

Client

Fitchburg State University

Challenge

The university needed an error-free way to create new student and employee accounts, and remove access from those who no longer needed it.

Solution

Implement a process that would create or delete accounts based on specific criteria.

Products and Connectors

User Management Resource Administrator (UMRA); Google, Banner, Active Directory, PeopleSoft

Result

75% reduction in time spent on account management and minimizing errors related to account creation or purging.

“There is no other company that I deal with regularly that I like better than Tools4ever.”

Sherry Horeanopoulos

Information Security Officer at Fitchburg State University

Efficient account creation

At the beginning of the semester, online students frequently called saying they were starting classes but did not have an account made for them. With UMRA in place, Fitchburg’s system is set up to create student accounts. Previously, multiple departments and people input information on the back end, so consistent conditions to automate account creation did not exist. Now, each time a new account is created, Sherry receives an email notification. “It just works; it’s in the background chugging away. Four times a day, all the accounts get created, and within a couple of hours, the users have their accounts ready to go.”

UMRA is configured to query Banner to look for new students, change existing records, and records that exist in AD but not in the database. When a new record is entered, an AD account is created along with a home directory, initial password, and group memberships, and located in the appropriate OU.

When a record is removed from Banner, the AD account is automatically disabled and moved to a separate OU. After 18 months, these accounts are purged from Active Directory. Each time an account is created or purged, an email is sent to the appropriate party.

Reliable account deletion

Another problem for Fitchburg was that hundreds of students graduate each year and there was no accurate way to determine whose accounts should be removed from AD. Fitchburg previously deleted all students who graduated but also removed current students. “We would be losing a subset because some students continued and some went on for graduate school and further education. We didn’t want to take them out if they were truly continuing, but we didn’t want them

lingering if they weren’t, and there was no easy way to know, based on our student records, who should be taken out,” said Sherry.

UMRA solved this problem. “It’s much more complicated to apply conditions to each of these events if you don’t have this tool; the tool just makes it so easy,” Sherry commented. With UMRA, if a terminated or graduated flag is set in the SIS application, the account is disabled, according to pre-defined rules. Fitchburg can easily target each subset of users with different conditions. For example, employees who are retiring keep their accounts for up to 18 months, but employees who are terminated are deleted immediately. “If your employment at FSU is terminated, with one click, you are out of the system,” stated Sherry, “significantly reducing security issues.”

Future Plans

Fitchburg State frequently hires adjunct professors for off-site or online courses. These professors are often concerned when they will start classes and whether they will have a logon. This happens when IT is not notified because that employee type may not be entered in the HR system. With the UMRA Web portal in the HR department, Fitchburg has the ability to disable terminated employees’ accounts immediately and create accounts for adjunct professors and other non-traditional faculty members.

Overall, Fitchburg State now spends 75% less time dealing with account issues. Sherry stated, “All of the employees love UMRA because it frees them up to do other things,” and “There is no other company that I deal with regularly that I like better.”