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NU Information Technology Introduces NetReg System into Residence Halls

A new network access registration system for Northwestern’s residence hall networks that parallels the authentication required for campus wireless networks is being introduced by NU Information Technology, starting next week. The NetReg (Network Registration) system is being implemented to improve service to students when problems arise with individual computers.

A phased rollout of NetReg will begin Monday, April 8 in two locations - 1835 Hinman and Jones Residential College. Assuming successful implementation, the rollout will continue over the next few weeks to include all residence halls. Students will be notified via flyers before their residence hall is activated.

"NU Information Technology is implementing NetReg to improve communication should a student's computer become a source of technical concern," said Tom Board, director of NUIT Technology Support Services. "This might include a virus problem detected by NUIT systems, or a complaint from outside the University brought under the Digital Millennium Copyright Act."

NetReg functions by creating a record linking a computer's Ethernet interface card hardware address (also known as the Media Access Control, or MAC, address) to a NetID and an Internet IP address assigned by Northwestern.

This allows NUIT engineers to associate an IP address with a particular NetID for notification purposes. Registration will be required only once, when the computer is unknown to the NetReg system. The student accesses a Web page to authenticate with his or her NetID and password. Subsequent computer restarts will not require registration unless there has been a change in the computer's network card. If students experience difficulties with NetReg, they can contact their Rescon by emailing resnet@northwestern.edu, calling 7-3726 or contacting the NUIT Information Center at 1-HELP.

Previously, when there were issues with a specific computer, NUIT would disable the student's network port to protect the rest of the campus network. This provided only an indirect notification to the student that a problem existed.

Under the new system, the NetReg record will allow NUIT engineers to contact the correct student by telephone or email-possibly without disabling the network port. "This way, the student will learn of the problem more quickly and can help us resolve it," Board said.

"NetReg will make our process for tracking down and helping users whose ports must be disabled much more streamlined and timely," said Weinberg junior Todd vanGoethem, a senior NUIT
residential consultant. "It used to be the best we could do was cut their connection and wait; now, we can actively support the user, making the experience much friendlier."

Board noted that the NetReg implementation was discussed without objections at the January 17 meeting of the ASG/IT Advisory Committee.

"It should be emphasized that this new service does not affect the University’s current privacy policy," said Tech senior Prashant Velagaleti, ASG Technology Director. "NUIT is merely trying to provide better customer service for students."

For further information, see www.tss.northwestern.edu/reference/netreg/.