

Project Name: Common Identity and Trust Collaborative (CommIT)

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Overview / Mission:

The CommIT project strives to provide a scalable, secure approach to matching electronic records for all college applicants and institutions and the creation of a unique electronic credential to:

- resolve matching problems at the university level,
- simplify the entire application process for students, parents, colleges and universities, and their external service providers, and
- do away with the last remaining vestiges of dependency on the social security number.

The initial goal of the CommIT Project is to support and enhance *identity and trust* as foundational services for higher education by addressing the challenges of the higher education admissions process. Alone, this SSO implementation for the application process would represent a significant advancement for all involved, however combined with the voluntary assignment of a unique identifier and vetting events already being performed, the validation of that applicant's identity is significantly increased.

Through the creation of an identity store, a unique student identifier, an identity provider, and an ecosystem for "Digital Notaries", CommIT can bring identity verification and trust into the marketplace, and, when combined with corresponding policies and technologies, will protect user control and privacy. With CommIT, only the applicants themselves will initiate record aggregation and release, which enhances security and privacy by preventing third party access without student authorization.

The CommIT project will provide a person registry to store only the minimum data required to support user uniqueness and password resets. In essence, the CommIT project provides an enabling service for identity management and is not a central student/applicant data repository.

Goals / Roadmap:

CommIT has completed a proof of concept project and has commenced building the infrastructure for the Phase 1 pilot which is expected to be available in the Summer of 2013. A small group of universities and vendors who have been active throughout the project have been invited to stand up services against this infrastructure. The Phase 1 pilot project includes creation of the identity store and IdP. The project will also include establishing legal, privacy, and governance structures as well as a business model for the CommIT product.

In the Summer of 2014, the CommIT Phase 2 product will integrate assurance into the CommIT ecosystem.

Approach to Work:

CommIT has three general mailing lists that are used for regular communications.

- admissions-project@incommon.org
- commit-pilot-business@incommon.org
- commit-pilot-tech@incommon.org,

The pilot is governed by a steering committee made up of executive sponsors and key participants that drives the resources, scope and timeline for the project. The Technical and Business working groups define the use cases, develop the infrastructure, provide support and documentation, and deliver a successful pilot project to which partners can connect their services.

Strategies for Sustainability:

Internet2 has contracted vendors to provide virtual machines to host the pilot project and to provide technical assistance. The P20W Education Standards Council (PESC) will lead the business development and community outreach components.

As executive sponsors of the project, Internet2 and PESC are in the process of developing the business model for a full scale product launch.

Relationships with Other Projects:

The CommIT project was initiated by the PESC Electronic Authentication and Authorization Task Force, and most of the early participants came from PESC. CommIT is now being sponsored by PESC and Internet2. CommIT relies on SAML 2.0 and Shibboleth, and depends upon the InCommon Federation as the core of its trust infrastructure. CommIT strengthens communications during the admissions process by students moving from high school to higher education and will maintain compliance with standards such as those that are generated by PESC. CommIT is actively supported by the Pennsylvania State University's Central Person Registry project.

Observed Gaps:

In order to deliver on the promise of increased assurance, CommIT will rely upon the creation of a strong digital notary system consisting of members who are willing and able to vouch for user identities in much the same way that notaries now do with written signatures.

Challenges:

The fundamental challenge for CommIT is to balance getting vendors and schools to participate while the infrastructure is being proven.

More Information: <https://spaces.internet2.edu/display/InCAdmissions/Home>