04 Sept 2009

InC-Student: Notes from 9/4/2009

Attending

Brendan Bellina, University of Southern California
Tom Black, Stanford University
John Bourne, Louisiana State University
Doug Falk, National Student Clearinghouse
Adriene Franklin, National Student Clearinghouse
Karen Hanson, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Keith Hazleton, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Nancy Krogh, University of Idaho
Scotty Logan, Stanford University
RL Bob Morgan, University of Washington
Karen Schultz, Penn State University
Bruce Vincent, Stanford University
Dean Woodbeck, Internet2 (scribe)

ACTION ITEMS

Adriene will coordinate a call with Bob Morgan, Ann West and Tom Cameron (at Meteor) to discuss InCommon Silver and LoA2.

Dean will contact Adriene to discuss promoting the availability of federating with NSC.

NATIONAL STUDENT CLEARINGHOUSE PILOT

Stanford and USC are in production with federated student access to the National Student Clearinghouse. The University of Washington has started work on this and will be next.

Doug Falk from the National Student Clearinghouse joined the call to discuss federated staff access. He reported that this will be a challenge. NSC's 16-year-old architecture has identity and access management spread out in several different places. The Clearinghouse just completed a mini enterprise architecture project and will be using a vendor package to centralize IAM.

NSC plans to move away from its legacy Informix platform, where all roles and users are tied tightly to the database. NSC created identities and roles for all staff members that use its service, so there are about 200,000 users in the database. This makes staff access issues quite different from the student pilot, because the Clearinghouse did not have students in its database. The staff project would require mapping roles from the institution to the Clearinghouse, then figuring out a way for authentication to take place on the campus. It is a significant change from the current procedure.

Doug is interested in any standards-based work on mapping roles from the current database. Bob mentioned the affiliation attribute as a possibility.

Currently, NSC handles new staff access requests manually. The customer service center generates a paper form that must be approved at the university. There is value in moving to federating and having the campuses do their own access administration. In fact, NSC would not need the name or userID of the staff member, but just an opaque identifier to use for tracebacks if problems arise and to be able to audit changes that are made.

In terms of next steps, Ann West and Tom Black both have a copy of NSC's user profiles. These might provide a good starting point, in terms of universities starting to get ready for federated staff access (looking at how the NSC document might map to campus roles, for example).

Stanford has reported a separate issue with staff access. Using the old access method, staff members were able to log into the NSC system as a particular student and see exactly what the student sees, for troubleshooting and problem resolution. This is not possible with the new federated method for student access.

ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK AND METEOR

There was a discussion about whether InCommon Silver maps to NIST LoA 2 and how this relates to a financial aid application, Meteor. Meteor is an open-source project of the National Council for Higher Education Loan Programs (nchelp.org). NCHELP is a nationwide network of guaranty agencies, secondary markets, lenders, loan servicers, collection agencies, schools, and other organizations involved in the administration of the Federal Family Education Loan Program. Meteor provides a way to query sources and compile a listing of a student's debt. Meteor requires LoA2.

Adriene is a member of the Meteor advisory team. She said Meteor looked at InCommon Bronze and InCommon Silver and felt the former was not enough and the latter is overkill. Might there be a profile under consideration that is in-between the two?

Bob reported that InCommon did its best to make sure that Silver is as close to NIST LoA2 as possible. He is very interested in knowing the details about why Silver is too strict. There was also a question about whether LoA2 might have also been too strict, but was adopted because it was better than LoA1 and, thus, the only standard available.

Adriene said she would coordinate a call with Bob, Ann West, and Tim Cameron, project manager for Meteor, to discuss this.

PROMOTING THE PILOT

Doug said that, from the NSC point of view, the student pilot has been successful and federating student self-service is now open to any school. This sparked a discussion about how the Clearinghouse and InCommon will get the word out.

NSC regional directors are talking to schools about student self-service. When a school is seriously interested, they talk with an implementation team and receive an implementation guide with a roadmap on how an InCommon participant can work with the Clearinghouse. NSC is also looking at doing an email blast to all of its members informing them that federating is available. Any institution already using self-service just needs to email implementation@studentclearinghouse.org.

As to InCommon, Brendan Bellina will be presenting at the Internet2 Fall Member Meeting and at the spring AACRAO meeting concerning how USC has federated with the clearinghouse. Dean Woodbeck, who does outreach and communications work for InCommon, will contact Adriene to coordinate what else InCommon might do and what the organizations might do together.

CAMPUS REPORTS

Penn State - nothing new at the moment.

Wisconsin - Will start looking at federating with NSC. Also involved with the CIC/InCommon initiative. Wisconsin is also setting up a lightweight federation for UW campuses (14 four-year and 13 two-year).

Stanford - Has been working with CollegeNet and hopes to sponsor them into InCommon sometime this fall. The initial focus will be on the course evaluation system ("What Do You Think"). CollegeNet seems excited and want to be part of the federation. Stanford is also engaging in a joint venture with CollegeNet to revise the company's current application service for use with graduate school applications. Stanford will probably specify a federated approach.

Washington - Has achieved federating (technical work) with NSF's Research.gov portal

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NEXT CALL - Friday, September 18, 3 p.m. EDT