

Essentials

NEWS

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CSS Mission

To provide a secure, reliable, and innovative computer environment that facilitates, supports and enhances the mission of the College of Engineering.

Hours

Elder and Hering computer labs are open 24 hours/day, 7 days/week except for cleaning. With an access card, you can enter the building and the labs after the Seamans Center closes.

Consulting, 1253 SC, M-Th 8am-9pm; F 8am-5pm; Sun 2-9pm

CSS Main Office, 1256 SC, M-F 8am-noon; 1-5pm

Patching Policy

Editor's Note: The Windows operating system gets patches and updates regularly, as does other software like Firefox, QuickTime, and Flash. In the past some patches were released on a monthly schedule. Now patches are released as often as needed, so CSS needed to allow for more frequent patching.

Background

With the new Engin domain and Microsoft Vista operating system, CSS is modifying its policy on patching Windows computers. Currently CSS does a weekly reboot of Windows computers whether or not there are operating system or software patches to be installed. The new policy is to patch only when necessary.

Student Lab Computers

Windows computers in student labs in 1245, 1220, 1231, and 2301 SC will be set to leave Automatic Updates turned on. That is Microsoft's recommended setting, and the setting you should have on any Windows computer at home. With Vista that will be the default setting.

Computers in those labs will be set to patch nightly beginning at 3am whenever there is a patch to be installed, either an operating system patch or a software patch. At patch time, all the computers in the labs will be unavailable for the few minutes that it takes for the patch to install and the computer to reboot.

Faculty and Staff Computers

Until we created the Engin domain, the usual patch schedule was to reboot Windows computers beginning at 1am on Sunday. The new schedule for computers in Engin is to take the computers down only if there are patches and updates to install. If no updates to Vista are released during the week and there are no software updates to install, the machines will remain up.

If a critical patch is released during the day, you will get a pop-up dialogue box that will allow you to defer the patching for up to 3 hours. After that period of time, your login session will terminate so the patch can be applied.

CSS suggests that you close all files when you leave your computer at the end of the day and logout before Sunday. If there are updates to install, the installation will not damage open files if all files are closed.

System Downtime - 3 July - 9am

On Friday, 3 July, CSS will shut down all servers and network equipment at 9am. Home and shared directories, email, web pages, and all networking services will be unavailable. Network services should be restored by 9:15am. File services, including email, will be available by 3pm, but may be restored sooner.

New Password Tool

Enroll Now

As of mid-May, CSS has offered a new password tool. The first time you connect to the [CSS password tool](#), you must login with your password and set the questions you can answer for subsequent logins. Read the web page for details on the program and its use. (<http://css.engineering.uiowa.edu/tools/password-tool.php>)

Why?

If you have enrolled and your password expires or you forget your password, you can use the questions to login to the password tool and then change your password. The ability may be most useful on weekends and in the evenings when there is no one from CSS around to change your password.

Home Directory Path Change

New Path Name with Engin

If you write scripts or programs that specify your home directory path, note that your path name will change when you login to the Engin domain. The computers in the 1245 Allen Electronic Classroom were moved to Engin on Friday, 15 May. The computers in Elder and Hering labs were moved to Engin the following week, along with the Linux workstations L-LNX000-015. Faculty and staff computers are scheduled to be moved to Engin on July 3.

When you login to the Engin domain, your home directory path will be of this form:

`/user/f/account`

where **f** is the first letter of your account and **account** is your Engineering account ID. For the account bgreene, the new path will be `/user/b/bgreene`.

If a script or program returns an error about the path name, verify that you are using the new format above. The old form of the path was `/user/student` (students) and `/user/eng` (faculty & staff).

Training on Campus

ITS will conduct [NExTT](#) (New Experiences with Teaching Technology) training sessions August 17-20, 2009. Sessions include ICON and some of its tools, wikis and blogs, collaborative web tools, podcasting and mashups, social networking, Photoshop, digital media, using clickers, and more.

Find out about other [ITS training](#) opportunities.

Training [beyond](#) ITS

Other training

UI [Learning and Development](#)

On-line Learning with [SkillSoft](#)



Essentials is a publication of [Computer Systems Support \(CSS\)](#) in the College of Engineering at the University of Iowa. *Essentials* is published during the year whenever there is sufficient news to report to the user community.

Back issues of *Essentials* are [on-line](#).

Conference Rooms Computers

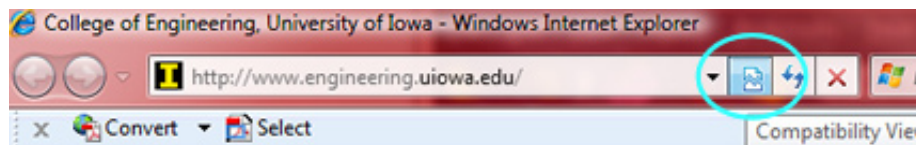
In Engin with Vista
Computers in the SC conference rooms -- 2228, 3111, 3210, 3220, 4505, and 4511 -- are in the Engin domain and run Microsoft Vista as the operating system. The **instructor** account no longer exists. You can login to those computers with your Engineering account or with the local account. Information about the local account is affixed to the computer in each conference room.

What is the meaning of life? See page 3.

IE8

Comes with Vista

Internet Explorer 8 (IE8) is more standards compliant than earlier versions. That is good in the larger scheme of things, but it also means that until web developers have time to remove from their code specific instructions for IE, you may notice that web pages that worked with IE before do not work correctly with IE8, which is the version that comes with Vista.



You may find that you need to access some web sites in compatibility mode. At the right end of the address bar URL area is the Compatibility View button (circled in illustration), to the left of the Refresh button. When using [Webmail](#) with IE8, you need to be in compatibility mode to have all the Webmail functionality.

You can find more information at [Microsoft](#).

Wolfram|Alpha

From 1 June 2009 Email from Wolfram

We're thrilled by the media coverage Wolfram|Alpha is receiving including these great articles by the [Los Angeles Times](#) and [Gizmodo](#).

Since our launch, Wolfram|Alpha has processed 100 million queries, and we've received nearly 55,000 pieces of feedback.

If you have yet to try Wolfram|Alpha, we invite you to start exploring. There are helpful hints to get you started in the [examples pages](#).

One thing that sets Wolfram|Alpha apart is its computational power, which comes from

Mathematica. Wolfram|Alpha taps the algorithmic power of Mathematica and the parallel power of gridMathematica. Mathematica is also the deployment platform for Wolfram|Alpha, demonstrating the power and flexibility of webMathematica.

The launch of Wolfram|Alpha is just the beginning of our endeavor to make all of the world's systematic knowledge immediately computable and accessible to everyone. We hope you will join us in our journey.

We look forward to sharing with you and the Wolfram|Alpha Community the improvements we're making as Wolfram|Alpha grows, including some changes that Stephen Wolfram pointed out in [this Wolfram|Alpha Blog post](#).

