

Frequently Asked Questions

Why are we switching away from Zimbra?

The company that hosts Zimbra for us is phasing out of that business, pushing us to either find another host or find another solution. Any other host we found would be a for-profit entity (and therefore more expensive); that, coupled with the "neutral" or worse campus opinion of Zimbra, made this a natural time to explore our options.

How was the decision made?

A steering committee made up of faculty, staff, and students led extensive campus testing of the two contenders for a replacement, Google and Microsoft, and provided an evaluation of the product's strengths and weaknesses to the Technology Planning and Priorities Committee. The Tuesday Group and the CTO made the final decision as to which product would be selected.

The process tested basic email and calendar functionality, as well as "surrogate/sharing" of mailboxes and calendars, across the web client, mobile clients, and desktop clients on Macs, Windows, Android devices, and iOS devices. There were 60 unique features tested across 14 environments, for a total of 840 testing points. The testers included staff, faculty, and students, for a total of more than 100 testers spending more than 500 hours combined. Some testers used test accounts with manufactured data, while more than half had their entire accounts migrated to each of the systems and tested using their own data.

Wasn't Gmail pretty much the choice from the beginning?

While Google certainly came in with some strong advocates, Microsoft's Office 365 was a strong contender. Members of the steering committee commented that their own opinions as to which was the right answer alternated regularly, depending on what they were testing on any given day. Feedback on the 840 testing points was mostly positive for both platforms, with a higher degree of feature parity than originally expected. In the end, it was a very difficult decision, as both options would have provided some advantages over Zimbra and each other, while also having some drawbacks that we would have to accept. In no way was it a "slam dunk" by either tool.

What are other schools doing?

We surveyed more than 65 other schools, including our "Peer 25." There is a nearly even split between Google and Microsoft Office365 for email. 7 schools we surveyed transitioned in the last year; of those seven, 3 went with Google, 3 went with Microsoft Office365, and the seventh went with Google for their students and Microsoft Office365 for their faculty and staff. By way of comparison to our "Peer 25", Williams and Smith use Google and

Amherst and Grinnell use Microsoft Office365. More locally, St. Olaf is a Google school and has been for more than 5 years, as is Macalaster.

Why did we choose Google?

Gmail and Google Calendar are a natural extension of our already extensive use of the Google environment. It makes sharing documents from Google Apps even more seamless. In addition, choosing Office365 would have added another core storage location (OneDrive) plus a large impact in the event of periodic Microsoft incompatibility with Apple products. Finally, choosing Google enables Carleton to more easily collaborate with St. Olaf for academic sharing, and it allows us (the campus and those of us in technology support) to work with Olaf to make more use of the environment than either school might be able to do alone.

I'm an Outlook user. What does this mean for me?

Outlook will work with Gmail. It uses a connector, much like Zimbra, but the connector is easier to install. In terms of functionality, it is identical to the functionality you now have with Zimbra (to the point where it is impossible to tell which system is running behind Outlook without looking at the account set up). Based on our testing and our conversations with other schools who are currently running Outlook with Gmail, we anticipate that it will be a very similar user experience in terms of stability, having to rebuild the Outlook profile, etc.

Will I get my old email/calendar appointments in Google?

There are limits on the size of attachments that we can copy to Gmail, so messages which have attachments larger than 25MB won't copy; also, Gmail prohibits some file types as attachments that Zimbra allowed (like .exe files). Additionally, the contents of your Trash and Junk folders will not be copied. Other than that, all of your email, contacts, and calendar appointments will be copied from Zimbra to Gmail. We will be sending instructions on how to manage messages with large or prohibited attachments long before the actual data copies happen.

While all of your appointments will copy over to Google Calendar, some of the extra information about individual appointments will not copy. For example, individual instances of a repeating appointment will lose their links to each other; Google Calendar will see them as individual appointments that happen to contain all the same information. Similarly, if you have invited people to an appointment, the information about who has accepted, declined, or not responded to the appointment will not copy over.

Finally, your Zimbra preferences will not copy over to Google. This includes items like your signature files, your vacation/away message, automatic forwards, rules/filters, block- and white-lists, and information on with whom you have shared calendars, folders, or address

books. These items will need to be manually recreated in Gmail after your migration is complete.

When will my account copy?

Our current timeline calls for Faculty and academic departmental admin assistants to have their accounts copied over the evening of Thursday, June 9th. All rising students (so current freshmen, sophomores, and juniors) will be copied over on Thursday, June 23rd. Staff accounts, plus any remaining accounts that didn't fit into one of the first two groups, will be copied on Thursday, July 7th.

How long will the account copy take?

It depends entirely on how much mail you have. The plan is for people to have their last seven days worth of email in their accounts, plus their last year of calendar appointments, when they arrive at work on Friday morning. The remaining contents of their accounts will fill in over the course of Friday and during the weekend. Most people will have all of their email and calendar appointments copied over when they get to work on Monday morning. People with exceptionally large accounts may take another day or two to complete.

Will I be able to access email while the copy is happening?

At the beginning of the copy process, there will be a brief period of time, most likely less than an hour, when we have removed your access to Zimbra in order for the copy to start, but your access to Gmail is not set up yet. After that initial period, you will be able to access Gmail continuously for the remainder of the copy process. All new email will be delivered to Gmail from then on.

Are there cool new things I can do in Gmail?

Yes! For example, Gmail has a feature called Appointment Slots that allows someone to create a block of time for other people to sign up for, e.g. for office hours or music lessons. It will also search the calendars of all people invited to a meeting to try to find a time that works for everyone. We will be sharing more tips, tricks, and new features as we get closer to the migration.

Are there things that I won't be able to do anymore in Gmail?

There are a few relatively minor things. The one with the most potential impact is that Gmail doesn't allow individual folders of email to be shared with another person, for instance. It also doesn't allow for email to be scheduled to be sent at a later time. As part of the migration process ITS will be working with individuals and departments to identify processes that will need to change to work with Google, or that could change to

make peoples' lives easier. More information about this will be announced as we get closer to the migration window.

Will I be able to set it up on my phone/tablet?

Absolutely. It works with the built-in (Apple-provided) email and calendar clients on iPhones and iPads; Google has also written their own email and calendar apps which you can choose to download. Android, being written by Google, works very well with Gmail using either the built-in apps (provided by your phone vendor) or Google's downloadable apps.

Is Google going to be able to scan my email? Will I see ads?

The license for Google Apps for Education specifically prohibits data mining in the "core" Google Apps, which includes Gmail, Calendar, the addressbook, Docs, Sheets, Slides, and Hangouts. Google will not display any ads on any of those core apps.

If I need help, do I have to go through Google?

No. The ITS Helpdesk will continue to provide email support. ITS has the option to use Google's technical support if we need to.

Does our move to Google for email and calendaring mean that we're going to stop using Microsoft products?

No. We use a wide variety of Microsoft tools on campus, most obviously Microsoft Office, and we will continue to do so. We are planning to roll out access to Microsoft Office365 over the next academic year, enabling online editing from anywhere in the world and free access to the Office suite for all faculty, staff, and students.