

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU)

Modern day universities and colleges face myriad challenges in trying to protect the availability, integrity, and confidentiality of institutional assets: students who “push the envelope” on the use of resources, the deployment of new technologies like WiFi networks, a strong tradition of academic freedom that supports open access, and a broad range of compliance requirements like PCI, HIPAA, and FERPA.

Adding to these challenges, the centralized leadership of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) is faced with creating a definitive yet flexible security and compliance program framework that can be executed cost-effectively across a range of independent-minded organizations.

As one of the nation's largest higher-education systems, MnSCU faces these information security challenges on an very large scale. With 34 colleges and universities and approximately 250,000 students, MnSCU's Office of the Chancellor's IT group must ensure security, compliance, and risk management, and they must also ensure that attacks don't emanate from within the campus IT environments.

A Long-Term Partnership with NetSPI

MnSCU has partnered with NetSPI since 2002 to develop organizational and campus-based IT security programs. Initially, the NetSPI team was brought in to review the security program and to create a strategy for developing security programs. The ongoing partnership since then has been focused on the execution of strategic and tactical program elements including:

- Strategic Program Review
- ISO 17799 Based Policy and Standards Development
- Compliance-Based Assessment
- Security Assessment Program Development



CASE STUDY AT A GLANCE

Client

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, with 34 colleges serving some 260,000 students across the state.

Challenge

Develop system-wide and campus-based IT security programs.

Solution

An ongoing partnership with NetSPI covering several initiatives including Strategic Program Review, ISO 17799 Based Policy and Standards Development, Compliance-Based Assessment, and Security Assessment Program Development

Results

“From the CIO steering committee, the technical team, to internal and external audit, NetSPI has worked exceptionally well with all groups within MnSCU to ensure that policy and recommendations apply to all of the very different groups in our organization.”

In addition to these projects, the NetSPI team is a regular presenter at the yearly MnSCU technology conference as well as at many of the meetings of CIOs and campus-based committees.

With relationships with numerous higher education organizations, NetSPI has developed a strong understanding of federal legislation such as FERPA, HIPAA, and GLBA, as well as of the PCI standards that apply to MnSCU campuses.

In-Depth Understanding

The NetSPI team has a deep understanding of the issues that affect campus-based IT security. The team has spent a significant amount of time understanding campus operations, library requirements, wireless use, and network architecture. Combining this knowledge with an understanding of organizational nuances has allowed NetSPI to be successful in helping MnSCU create realistic goals and strategies to meet their security, compliance, and risk management requirements.

Bev Schuft, Director of Information Security for MnSCU, noted that “From the CIO steering committee, the technical team, to internal and external audit, NetSPI has worked exceptionally well with all groups within MnSCU to ensure that policy and recommendations apply to all of the very different groups in our organization. NetSPI’s strong understanding of organizational requirements, IT and IT security, have made them a key resource in developing and implementing portions of our security program.”

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BEV SCHUFT,
DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION
SECURITY, MINNESOTA STATE
COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

A Better Approach to Risk, Compliance, and Security Consulting

NetSPI focuses on customized, responsive, product-independent consulting. Teams of security professionals with deep technical expertise and specific industry knowledge provide a range of advisory, assessment, and audit services that deliver objective, strategic, actionable results. The result is objective, strategic guidance for your security and compliance needs.

