



Grouper Shines at Northern Arizona University



With its main campus in sunny Flagstaff, Northern Arizona University (NAU) is a teaching and

research institution with outstanding programs in areas such as biomedical sciences, environmental sciences, and engineering. The wide range of degree programs — and the nearly 40 extended NAU campuses throughout the state, plus online programs as well — mean that there are a multitude of groups needing to be maintained for both administrative and academic/collaborative purposes.

The Problem

When NAU decided to implement an Enterprise Group System to handle formation and management of groups across their institution, they set high standards, aiming for flexible groups that could be administered locally instead of centrally and could be filtered in various ways. An Active Directory (AD) system was already in place, but the burden on the AD administrators in maintaining groups was a problem.

For example, if a computer science student wanted to allow their team to access a code base, the student would submit a request to the instructor to create a group. This

would usually require the instructor to make a request to the administrator of the required resource to allow permission. Subsequent maintenance of the group, to add or delete members, would need to go through a similar process. A new process was needed to “cut out the middle man” and

allow the end user a much quicker turnaround time for group use.

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The Solution

NAU selected the Grouper Groups Management Toolkit to create an Enterprise Group System. “Grouper’s flexibility was key, as it allowed for us to pick and choose how we orient and distribute our group structure and permissions. Other key features were Grouper’s existing web services

and API,” says Ray Walker, senior software systems engineer.

In developing the user interface for the Enterprise Group System, NAU decided to integrate with uPortal, the leading open source portal framework for higher education, already in use for other purposes at NAU.

The Result

The result was a clear and flexible user interface for setting up and maintaining groups. Advanced features such as groups based on LDAP filters (for example all freshmen) and included/excluded sub-groups and individuals within a group are included in NAU’s design. The ability to add an expiration date to a group membership is a feature NAU would like to incorporate in the future.

About Grouper

Want to learn more about what Grouper can do for your campus? Read more about Grouper on the back of this page and at grouper.internet2.edu.



Grouper Groups Management Toolkit

Giving Stewards Control of Groups to Manage Membership and the Resources They Access

Internet2's Grouper Groups Management Toolkit enables project managers, departments, institutions and end users to create and manage institutional and personal groups. It puts the control of a group in the hands of its steward and enables the person to manage the membership and the resources a group can access.

Why Should I Use Groups?

Separate applications may use groups to track an individual's role, or to determine which users are authorized to access the resource. Because groups are managed separately in each application, keeping the membership roster consistent across these services becomes very difficult. If a member left a project, for example, the group's email list, wiki space, calendar, research database and other shared resources needed to be updated separately.

Grouper provides a way to define a group once and use that group across multiple applications.

Manage from One Location

Grouper consolidates group information and creates a single point of management. Membership changes are done once and provisioned to the applications. A group owner can define membership, create a group structure within a domain, or delegate all of this to someone else.

Distribute Control

Grouper keeps the group membership decisions in the hands of the business/group owners, access control in the hands of the application owners, and the technology management in the hands of the technologists. Individuals can also use the system to review their group memberships.

IT administrators are relieved from the burden of keeping up with the day-to-day group changes and Grouper increases the overall integrity of the policy and technology interaction.

Help Collaboration Happen

With Grouper, an owner sets up a group in one spot, feeding membership information to applications like

email lists and calendars. The owner needs no technical skills to create, change or delete groups or members. For example, a researcher might create a group and enable members to participate on an email list or view a web site. Students use Grouper to set up and manage groups for similar applications as they work together on shared projects and class work.

Grouper enables group management institution-wide and on an individual level, providing more secure, robust and responsive methods to control access to resources.

Ease Staff Support Load

Grouper separates the management of groups from the technical system, so a change in technology has no effect. This reduces the end-user support calls associated with underlying infrastructure changes. Removing IT from the middle of managing groups will help ease your helpdesk headaches as well.

How Do I Get Started?

To learn more about the Grouper Groups Management Toolkit, visit the Grouper website (<http://grouper.internet2.edu>) and join the community by participating on the email lists and attending the workshops and presentations offered around the country.

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