From:	All University on behalf of Information Technology
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Roger Williams University

Information Security [INFOSEC] Briefing

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August - 2023 Cybersecurity Focus

VPN: the double edge sword? The use of Virtual Private Networking (VPN) services is on the rise, and for good reason. For corporate use cases, they allow remote users secure access to private IT resources not directly accessible via the public Internet. At RWU, these services include Colleague and department share drives. When it comes to personal home use, VPNs provide a means to encrypt your data and conceal your actual IP address with one issued by the VPN provider. Although the use cases between corporate and personal VPNs vary, the underlying technology remains to encrypt and alter your originating IP address.

If personal VPN services offer security, are there any issues using them while working? The short answer is yes – but let's explain. The impossible journey is a term security professionals use to identify malicious account logins from multiple locations within a time frame that's impossible to travel. For example, consider an RWU employee logs into O365 email from their house in Providence, RI. A few hours later, they start a personal VPN service, such as NORD, that funnels their web traffic through a connection in Los Angeles, CA. From the viewpoint of IT administrators, two logins from locations that cannot be traveled within the 2-hour timeframe is considered impossible. More troublesome is the login pattern appears identical to a breached account. Ultimately, using 3rd party private VPN services can lead to false-positive alerts when used to access corporate resources - resulting in locked accounts until the discrepancy is cleared.

Last month, RWU's IT department completed network upgrades to accommodate more university-owned VPN connections while simplifying the authentication process to use your O365 credentials and DUO MFA. **We strongly encourage all remote workers to use this VPN service.** For legacy VPN users, this requires a software upgrade facilitated by Mediatech. New users can request VPN access by reviewing the policy and completing the online form.

We hope you all had a great Summer and looking forward to welcoming students back to campus!

IT Management

Don't take the bait! IT will never ask you for your username and password via email.
Phishing e-mails attempt to deceive you into giving up private information in a response
to a message or by leading you to a fraudulent web site.

For more tips about phishing, go to www.phishinginfo.org.

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