

## **Worldwide Spam Increase Hits CMA**

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The California Maritime Academy is not alone in the fight against spam. Worldwide, spam hit record highs during the past few months. According to the Anti-Phishing Working Group (online at <http://www.antiphishing.org/>), [spam and phishing have increased 757% over last year!](#) This has placed a tremendous burden on institutional spam filters and resulted in more spam showing up in our inboxes. In fact, many technologists believe that we are losing the battle because spam filtering technology is not keeping up with the new techniques continually devised by spammers.

During October, 656,148 messages were received at Cal Maritime. Of these, 85% were identified as spam, possible spam or messages with virus payloads. Given the volume of incoming email, a percentage point of unidentified spam slipping through the filter is problematic. Some of our sister institutions reported that as much as 95% of their incoming email was spam-related.

Based on feedback from faculty, staff and students, the IT Department felt that our institution's current filter, LightSpeed, was not adequately keeping up with the influx of spam. Our technology support staff members were also spending more time responding to user complaints and making configuration changes to the LightSpeed filter on a daily basis. It became apparent that a change was needed.

After polling our CSU sister institutions to determine what they were using and checking other sources, we selected SonicWALL's hardened appliance. It is purported to successfully identify 95% of incoming spam and has a +/- .05% false positive rate (false positives are good emails that are misidentified as spam). By providing end-users with greater control over what they receive, it has significantly reduced the time IT devotes to maintaining the spam filter and responding to users' spam problems.

The new spam filter sends each user a daily Junk Box summary. These messages allow people to view or unjunk their quarantined messages. The summaries will also contain links that let them manage what they want to allow and block. Users can also change the default settings for how aggressively spam is filtered in various categories. Other links will allow them to change the frequency and timing of their Junk Box Summaries, to see various Spam Reports or to logon to the spam filter.

So, the question that begs to be answered is this. How is the new spam filter doing that was installed at CMA on November 22? Feedback from many beleaguered spam warriors on campus indicates that it is doing better... much better in some cases. In November, an average of 87% of the incoming messages were identified as spam. It is averaging 91% in December. However, on some days it has climbed as high as 95%. The academy receives daily as many as 10,000 directory harvest attacks in which spammers try to harvest a list of all the institution's email addresses and as many as 160

inbound virus payloads. If a particular type of spam message is consistently getting through to your inbox, the IT Department asks that you forward the message to [helpdesk@sum.edu](mailto:helpdesk@sum.edu) so that they can look into the matter.