



University of Richmond Keeps Sensitive Cloud Data Safe and Secure With Proofpoint



The Challenge

- Strengthen security against phishing, ransomware and email attacks
- Protect sensitive financial and healthcare information in the cloud
- Consolidate security visibility to help staff work more efficiently

The Solution

- Proofpoint Cloud App Security Broker
- Proofpoint Enterprise Protection
- Proofpoint Targeted Attack Protection
- Proofpoint Threat Response Auto-Pull

The Results

- Proofpoint CASB reduces risk of data loss in cloud environments
- Advanced email protection safeguards faculty and students from phishing, spam and other risks
- Unified solution provides centralized visibility into threats to keep IT efficient

The Organization

With a campus population of approximate 6,000 students, faculty and staff, the University of Richmond is not only a top liberal arts institution, but a target-rich environment. To keep email communications and campus community data safe from the latest threats, the university partnered with Proofpoint.

The Challenge

Protecting a wide array of student and personal data

Founded in 1830, the University of Richmond is an academically challenging and intellectually vibrant institution committed to providing an outstanding student experience through integrated coursework, hands-on research, creative expression, and experiential learning. The University of Richmond generates world-changing research and exports top leaders and scholars worldwide. It is also home to 17 Division 1 athletics teams. The student and alumni achievements at Richmond are uniquely possible due to the wide range of support received from its faculty and staff.

“We are a premier institution, consistently ranked among the top 25 liberal arts universities in the United States,” said Keith McIntosh, CIO at University of Richmond. “We strive to provide a premier student experience. Our IT team is dedicated to doing our best to support our students, while helping our faculty and student support staff to enable a high-quality education.”

Communications are an essential part of campus life, and the university is constantly working to strengthen its security posture.

“Proofpoint CASB provides the visibility we need to minimize risk exposure for our data in the cloud. The dashboards and capabilities for presenting the information are really effective in terms of alerting us and being able to drill down and do threat hunting and incident response.”

John Craft, CISO, University of Richmond

“We are constantly being targeted by phishers and fraudsters through email, receiving about five million email threats a month,” said John Craft, CISO at University of Richmond. “While we do the best we can to educate our users to carefully assess emails, it is a constant battle, because sometimes people are in a hurry. Like other industries, we are also facing threats such as ransomware, so our big concern is making sure that any public-facing systems—or even internal private-facing systems—are patched and secured on a regular basis.”

As the university invests in new, more advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), managing and keeping its data safe is also becoming more difficult.

“Another challenge that we face, with the administration of AI is the identification of sensitive data in our environment,” said Craft. “If you start using AI within your organization and expose that to any of your systems, and you don’t have an accurate inventory of your data and where it resides, you could inadvertently be exposing sensitive data—even through a system that is not traditionally classified as sensitive. So getting our arms around data is something we’re looking at as well.”

The university sought a comprehensive solution that provided advanced protection for its email communications, as well as the wide variety of data that it increasingly hosts on cloud-based services.

The Solution

Proactively stopping cloud data loss and insider threats

Craft and his team already had extensive experience with Proofpoint email security solutions at the University of Richmond as well as other institutions where he worked previously. As the university extended its operations to more cloud-based environments, Craft wanted to work proactively to protect not only communications, but users’ cloud data.

“We wanted to get a better picture as to what our risk exposure was in the cloud, because we have all of this data sitting in the cloud in Microsoft, Google and Box repositories without the traditional controls that we have on campus,” said Craft. “So we wanted to gain the ability to identify malicious files and activities, and trace it back and look at it—all in one dashboard, with reporting and alerting.”

After considering a variety of solutions, it became clear that Proofpoint Cloud App Security Broker (CASB) best fit the bill.

“We did a proof of concept with Proofpoint CASB, and that went really well,” said Craft. “We had a fantastic implementation engineer who was great to work with, extremely patient and very thorough in helping us set up the environment. Our network services team worked closely with them to make sure that we were interfacing it with our email platforms and our cloud-based storage platforms.”

Proofpoint CASB secures cloud users, apps and data from threats, data loss and compliance risks. It gives the university the ability to protect sensitive data and respond to cloud security incidents with instant context. The solution is integrated with the Proofpoint Information Protection suite to help Craft and his team accelerate incident response with user and threat context behind risky data movement.

Proofpoint Enterprise Protection is an integral part of the solution, helping the university protect its email communications from spam, phishing and other threats.

“Proofpoint enables us to detect threats early and quarantine email,” said Craft. “So once Proofpoint finds one, it can automatically quarantine similar emails to protect our users. We rely on Proofpoint very heavily to help us make sure that spam and phishing get blocked from the outset where possible—or recover quickly in the event a malicious email does slip through.”

The Results

Toward a more secure campus environment

Proofpoint has enabled the University of Richmond to gain better control and insight into a broad range of data that is constantly in motion across the environment.

“Our university is kind of like a small city,” said Craft. “We have public works, healthcare and financial services, so we have regulated data of all varieties. We have DLP rules established for personally identifiable information (PII) and payment card industry (PCI) data, HIPAA healthcare data and more. We get alerts or take other actions depending on the data type based on the activity and the data classification of the DLP recognition. And for the most part, we’ve seen really good success rates. We haven’t seen high false positive rates with our DLP. Our Proofpoint engineer was fantastic, and did a great job of helping us tune those DLP rules.”

The solution integrates smoothly with all the IT team’s top applications and services, enabling Craft and his team to align the solution to meet their needs.

“The level of integration in products that we use on a regular basis, such as Box, Google and Microsoft, together with the ability to apply our rules and build our custom rule sets really gives us a lot of freedom,” said Craft.

“We primarily use the pre-canned reports, but we have built custom reports as well when we’re doing threat hunting, to delve down and see specific aspects of an activity or an account. The new rule editor made a big improvement. I like being able to create one rule and have all of them there. It really made things more efficient.”

The advanced email protection has also proven effective, and the centralized, intuitive interface helps the IT team work to understand issues faster, and take action to address threats more efficiently.

“We have a fairly complex email environment, offering both Microsoft and Google email to our community,” said Craft. “Proofpoint greatly simplifies our work because I don’t have to look in multiple dashboards to see the information for each email domain. I’m able to get consolidated threat information from Proofpoint for that. As a Proofpoint Threat Response Auto-Pull (TRAP) customer, we’re able to quickly pull email from either email platform very quickly. That’s been a huge benefit to us over the past year.”

The Proofpoint technical support team has helped keep the solution running smoothly, providing assistance in fine-tuning features and rules, as well as optimizing performance.

“The Proofpoint team has been very responsive whenever we’ve had a need or request, and that’s been fantastic,” said Craft.

For McIntosh and his organization, Proofpoint has been most effective helping his team do what it does best: provide a superior teaching and learning experience to everyone in the campus community.

“I’ve dealt with a lot of vendors in my higher education career, and I don’t recommend vendors often, but based on our experience, I would be happy to recommend Proofpoint products and services to any other higher education institution,” said McIntosh.

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Proofpoint, Inc. is a leading cybersecurity and compliance company that protects organizations’ greatest assets and biggest risks: their people. With an integrated suite of cloud-based solutions, Proofpoint helps companies around the world stop targeted threats, safeguard their data, and make their users more resilient against cyber attacks. Leading organizations of all sizes, including 75 percent of the Fortune 100, rely on Proofpoint for people-centric security and compliance solutions that mitigate their most critical risks across email, the cloud, social media, and the web. More information is available at www.proofpoint.com.

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