

Information Security Newsletter

May 2019



Securing Online Accounts with
Multi-factor Authentication!

From the Desk of Milind Samant, ISO

Have you noticed how often security breaches, stolen data, and identity theft are consistently front-page news these days? Perhaps you, or someone you know, are victims of cyber criminals who stole personal information, banking credentials, or more. As these incidents become more prevalent, you should consider using multi-factor authentication, which is often also called strong authentication, or two-factor authentication. This technology may already be familiar to you, as many banking and financial institutions require both a password and one of the following to log in: a call, email, or text containing a code. By applying these principles of verification to your personal and work accounts, such as email, social media, and more, you can better secure your information and identity online!

What it is

Multi-factor authentication (MFA) is defined as a security process that requires more than one method of authentication from independent sources to verify the user's identity. In other words, a person wishing to use the system is given access only after providing two or more pieces of information which uniquely identifies them.

How it works

There are three categories of credentials: something you either know, have, or are. Here are some examples in each category.

Something you know	Something you have	Something you are
<i>Password/Passphrase PIN Number</i>	<i>Security Token or App Verification Text, Call, Email, Smart Card</i>	<i>Fingerprint Facial Recognition Voice Recognition</i>

In order to gain access, your credentials must come from at least two different categories. One of the most common methods is to login using your user name and password. Then a unique one-time code will be generated and sent to your phone or email, which you would subsequently enter within the allotted amount of time. This unique code is the second factor.

When should it be used?

MFA should be used to add an additional layer of security around sites containing sensitive information, or whenever enhanced security is desirable. MFA makes it more difficult for unauthorized people to log in as the account holder. According to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) MFA should be used whenever possible, especially when it

comes to your most sensitive data – like your Office365 email, financial accounts, and health records. Some organizations will require you to use MFA; with others it is optional. If you have the option to enable it you should take the initiative to do so to protect your data and your identity.

Activate MFA on your accounts right away!

To learn how to activate MFA on your accounts, head to the [Lock Down Your Login](https://www.lockdownyourlogin.org/) site, which provides instructions on how to apply this fantastic form of security to many common websites and software products you may use. Lock Down Your Login is a resource created by the National Cyber Security Alliance and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security through their Stop Think Connect campaign to empower citizens with cybersecurity knowledge and practices.

If any of your accounts are not listed on that resource site, look at your account settings or user profile and check whether MFA is an available option. If you see it there, consider implementing it right away!

Conclusion

User name and password are no longer sufficient to protect accounts with sensitive information. By using multifactor authentication you can protect these accounts and reduce the risk of online fraud and identify theft. Consider also activating this feature on your work email account! If you need assistance to setup multi-factor authentication for SUNY Old Westbury's Office365 email account, please contact the Service Desk at X-3098 or send an email to servicedesk@oldwestbury.edu

Resources:

- <https://www.lockdownyourlogin.org/>
- <https://www.us-cert.gov/ncas/tips/ST05-012>

Reminders....

- **Set a strong password:** Use at least 8 characters in upper and lower case, numbers, and symbols.
- **Keep your device locked:** Use a password, pin, pattern, or fingerprint lock when you are not actively using it.
- **When in doubt, throw it out and contact the Service Desk at servicedesk@oldwestbury.edu or call X3098.**

Provided By:

<p>Information Technology Services Division of Business & Finance Evan Kobolakis, CIO Len Davis, Sr. Vice President & CFO</p>	 <p>NATIONAL CYBERSECURITY ALLIANCE</p>	 <p>SUNY OLD WESTBURY OWN YOUR FUTURE</p>
---	--	--

The information provided in the Monthly Information Security Newsletter is intended to increase the data security awareness of SUNY Old Westbury end users and to help them behave in a more secure manner within SUNY Old Westbury work environment. While some of the tips may relate to maintaining a home computer, the increased awareness is intended to help improve the SUNY Old Westbury's overall cyber security posture.

Disclaimer: These links are provided because they have information that may be useful. The SUNY Old Westbury ITS Department does not warrant the accuracy of any information contained in the links and neither endorses nor intends to promote the advertising of the resources listed herein.