

Administrative Access
to User Computers
22-101
February 18, 2022



The University of Texas at El Paso
Office of Auditing and Consulting

"Committed to Service, Independence and Quality"



The University of Texas at El Paso
Office of Auditing and Consulting Services

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February 18, 2022

Dr. Heather Wilson
President, The University of Texas at El Paso
Administration Building, Suite 500
El Paso, Texas 79968

Dear Dr. Wilson:

The Office of Auditing and Consulting Services has completed a limited-scope audit of Administrative Access to User Computers. During the audit, we identified opportunities for improvement and offered the corresponding recommendations in a separate management letter. We intend the recommendations will assist the department in strengthening controls and help ensure that the University's mission, goals and objectives are achieved.

We appreciate the cooperation and assistance provided by the Technology Support and Systems Support staff during our audit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lori Wertz".

Lori Wertz
Chief Audit Executive

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Auditing and Consulting Services has completed a limited scope audit of Administrative Access to User Computers to determine adherence to State and University security controls and standards. Due to the confidential nature of the audit, we issued a separate management letter to Technology Support, which details specific findings and recommendations. These confidential results are exempt from the Texas Public Information Act under Texas Government Code §552.139.

Background

Users with administrator access can make fundamental changes to computers to include installing unauthorized malicious software, connecting outdated devices, and making critical configuration changes. These changes could then spread to other segments of the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) network and cause significant disruptions. As such, proper management of this type of access is essential to reduce this risk.

The audit was conducted in accordance with the Institute of Internal *Auditors' International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing and Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards*.

Audit Objectives and Scope

The objective was to determine if the University properly controls and manages administrative access to user computers to reduce the risk of unauthorized access and activities. The scope of the audit was limited to, (a) administrators and non-administrator users with administrator rights to user computers (i.e., not servers) and (b) user computers running Microsoft Windows during the period of September 1, 2021, to the January 10, 2022.

Strengths

Technology Support has implemented several University-wide initiatives to mitigate security risks impacting user computers. These initiatives include real-time detection and response of suspicious activity as well as automatically backing-up certain computer folders to the cloud.

Summary of Audit Results

Administrative Access to User Computers	Number of Findings
A. Access Management - Active Directory (AD) Administrative Groups	2
B. UTEP Users with Administrative Rights to User Computers	5
C. Generic Local Administrative Accounts with Access to User Computers	0

Conclusion

Based on the results of audit procedures performed, we conclude Technology Support and Systems Support can strengthen existing security controls by implementing the recommendations included in the separate confidential management letter.

We wish to thank the management and staff at Technology Support and Systems Support for their assistance and cooperation provided throughout the audit.

Report Distribution:

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Mr. Luis Hernandez, Vice President for Information Resources
Mr. Leon Cruz, Assistant Vice President, Telecommunications Infrastructure
Mr. Gerard Cochrane, Chief Information Security Officer
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