

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

The Island University

6300 Ocean Drive, Corpus Christi, TX 78412 (361) 825-2335 FAX (361) 825-2620

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: Tuesday, November 11, 2008

CONTACT: Marshall Collins 361.825.2427 or 361.815.5588

Steve Paschal 361.825.2336 or 361.850.3172

University Temporarily Blocks Search Engine Access As Scans, Other Actions Are Engaged For Securing Personal Data

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas – Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi temporarily disabled Web searches late yesterday (Nov. 10) to its Web site by Google and other search engines to halt possible public access to any personal data stored in its computer files.

The action stems from ongoing work by computer security personnel who have spent the past several days sifting through millions of files in search of documents that contain student social security numbers or other personal information. A file was discovered Nov. 3 that contained 1,430 admissions applicant names and social security numbers from January and February 2005.

In a related incident, a student notified the university on Monday, Nov. 10, that he saw his name and social security number in a list of 46 students who had registered for the online version of the English 3301 course taught during the spring 2005 semester. The list was on a faculty member's Web site. The University immediately removed the list from public view.

The University stopped using social security numbers for student identification in August 2007.

Texas A&M-Corpus Christi's quick move to close access to its site by Web search engines was to ensure that the public could not gain access to documents that may contain personal information. The university will restore search engine access as soon as possible. Scanning and protecting data will be an ongoing effort.

University President Flavius Killebrew issued a notice today (Nov. 11) requiring faculty and staff to review computers, file storage devices and web servers and remove all sensitive data. Those persons not complying may be subject to disciplinary action.

Although Texas A&M-Corpus Christi believes there to be only a low risk of identity theft through these recent data incidents, it is sending a precautionary advisory to persons identified. No cases of identity theft have been reported.

The University has a Web site on information security and identity theft for individuals who may have concerns regarding the discovered data. The “ID Security Resources” site can be accessed at <http://idsecurity.tamucc.edu>.

--- A&M-CC ---