

# Dust settles on MSU cyberattack, officials tout new security and user interface

Morehead State Public Radio | By [Samantha Morrill](#)

Published August 16, 2023 at 4:41 PM EDT

More than a month after a serious cyberattack on Morehead State University, the first week of classes is underway and campus systems are back online. Officials said around July 10 computers on campus started experiencing issues. University President Jay Morgan said at that time, the Information Technology Department stepped in quickly.

“They and we, the university, for lack of a better term, turned our systems off. We very quickly found out that we were subjected to a pretty strong cyberattack during that time and it was creating a lot of haywire in our systems,” said Morgan.

In the following weeks, officials worked to inspect and clean more than 2,000 computers, identify any compromised data and get systems back online in time for the start of the semester. Similar attacks have occurred recently at Austin Peay State University and UT Chattanooga. Morgan said cyberattacks are becoming more commonplace.

“Not only for universities, which is very unfortunate, both four-year and two-year universities, we’ve seen recent reports of cybercriminals hitting high schools, and public K-12 schools, hospitals,” said Morgan.

The MSU leader said recognizing this is the new norm, officials used the service disruption as an opportunity to strengthen security systems and get ahead on some planned technology improvements. That includes the online portal some 10,000 people use to access MSU services.

“We were wanting to upgrade that in about a year or so, and we said, you know, why not just go ahead and do it all right now,” said Morgan.

Morgan said the school’s IT department is working to fine-tune the portal. The MSU president said any issues or concerns should be reported to the IT Help Desk at 606-783-4357.

As of Tuesday afternoon, officials had identified 20 to 21 individual accounts on campus that were compromised in the attack. Morgan said the school is working directly with those people to secure their information. Officials said it does not appear that any

information in those accounts has been used. As another layer of insurance, the school is offering identity theft protection across campus.

“Free to all students and all faculty. Those letters and communications are getting ready to go out just any day now. That will be free for students to run for 12 months, just as an added extra layer of precaution,” said Morgan.

The identity theft protection offer includes all staff, as well as faculty and students. Morgan said a small number of non-critical files were deleted, tampered with or otherwise damaged in the cyberattack. The university is working with a third-party vendor to recover and repair those files. Morgan commended the campus for their response to the disruption.

“Thank you to our whole campus both on and off campus, our university community for their patience. You know, it was frustrating there for what really is a short amount of time in the grand scheme of things. But you know, when you go without your primary personal computer on campus for a little while, it seems like the end of the world. In actuality, I think our staff did a wonderful job getting back up and going,” said Morgan.

In addition to the enhanced cyber security and upgraded user-interface, Morgan said the university used the cyberattack disruption to replace several hundred old computers with newer machines.