

# MATH FACULTY COMPUTING FACILITY (MFCF)

MFCF's newsletter with updates on the Math Faculty computing environment.

Fall 2020...Staff changes; Linux and Windows upgrades; new central file service; campus-wide IT system changes, and more

---

## MFCF staff changes

MFCF bade a fond farewell this year to two long-time staff members who are now enjoying retirement. Christine Roth was with us for over 30 years in operations and as an IT specialist. That goes back to the days of mounting magnetic tape reels for the Honeywell and VAX 11/780. Debbie Brown was our long-time administrative manager, and left her creative mark on MC by way of the Tutte display, the colourful corner sitting areas, and other special projects. We appreciate Deb and Chris's many years of service to the Faculty.

Welcome (welcome back!) to Wendy Zehr in the role of Client Services Institutional. Wendy is responsible for administrative and financial aspects of the department.

At the end of December, Dr Steve Vavasis completes his term as MFCF Director and Associate Dean, Computing. Looking back on his time with us, Steve identifies as highlights the acquisition of a new central file server and GPU servers, the student pre-registration system, Overleaf, and in-progress cloud storage. There's more detail about some of these below. Thanks to Steve for his leadership over the past few years.

***This just in!*** Dr Martin Lysy of Statistics and Actuarial Science will take on the role of MFCF Director and Associate Dean, Computing, starting in January 2021. Welcome to our (virtual) hallway, Dr Lysy!

---

## New central file server

MFCF has acquired a new Network Appliance system to provide central file service (files.math, files.student.math) for home directories and departmental drives. This continues our long-standing relationship with NetApp that goes back to the founding of the company by former CS professor Dr Michael Malcolm. The new system is in preparation now. You can expect higher performance than the current model while still benefiting from on-line snapshots and enterprise-quality reliability and fault tolerance.

We anticipate switching to the new file server on December 27th. This will require a major interruption of all access to central file service for all central servers that MFCF operates and for all desktop machines that use departmental drives and central home directories. Please watch for important announcements about this.

---

## New and upgraded Linux and Windows CPU servers

In August, we continued the refresh cycle of adding new machines to the pool of Linux CPU servers. Two were added to the fastlinux.math pool. The two oldest machines in that pool will be moved to the general-purpose linux.math pool, and the two oldest from there will be retired.

In mid-November, we began redeploying all Linux CPU servers that are still running our traditional environment on CentOS. They will be removed from service a couple at a time, reinstalled with Ubuntu and our new environment, and then returned to service. For details of the schedule and machines involved please see the news item on our web site:

<https://uwaterloo.ca/mfcf/news>

Similarly, the two oldest machines in the windows.math pool will be replaced in the coming months.

---

## macOS: Say "goodbye" to Sierra, but "not yet" to Big Sur

With the announcement of macOS 11 Big Sur in September, it is time to upgrade any machines still running macOS 10.12 Sierra to keep them on a supported OS. We will be contacting users of 10.12 systems to schedule these upgrades.

Our early testing of Big Sur exposed problems with Cisco AnyConnect VPN and printing; therefore, we recommend that you not upgrade to Big Sur. Wait until there are fixes for these problems. The VPN client will be fixed soon.

---

## Computing orientation for grad students

This fall, MFCF hosted orientation sessions for grad students to learn about the computing environment. Slides from the presentations have been emailed to the students and are posted on our web site at <https://uwaterloo.ca/mfcf/services/audience/25>

---

## Turn off the Flash

If you still have Adobe Flash on your computer, you may see a pop-up window from Adobe inviting you to remove it. Flash is obsolete and there will be no more fixes for its security problems, so please do uninstall it if prompted. Automatic removals will start in December. The

Health and Safety Office has updated all their web-based training modules to ensure that Flash is no longer needed.

---

## GPU computing

Are you into GPU computing? Let us know your plans so we can decide whether to allocate some of our budget to buying another GPU server, and can choose which type of GPU would best suit the workload.

---

## Campus IT system changes

By now everyone should be well aware of major IT system changes being advanced by IST:

- the requirement for two-factor authentication for most central services as of Nov. 17.  
<https://uwaterloo.ca/2fa>
- the move of email service from on-premises Exchange to cloud-based Office 365  
<https://uwaterloo.ca/office-365-employee-email/>
- the switch from conventional office telephones to a headset and software on a desktop computer <https://uwaterloo.ca/campus-telephone-migration-project/>

If you have questions about these projects, you can ask us, or contact the IST Service Desk at [helpdesk@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:helpdesk@uwaterloo.ca), ext. 44357

---

## Help us help you

Questions or problems to report? Do you know a way we could make math computing better? Is there something you'd like to hear about in these newsletters? Do you want to write an article? Email Lori Suess at [lsuess@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:lsuess@uwaterloo.ca) or fill out a request at <https://rt.uwaterloo.ca/SelfService/Forms/MFCF/>. We'd love to hear what you have to say!

---



MFCF Webpage



MFCF Help

---