Clean Access Program stops viruses in residence halls

Seth Miller/staff writer Issue date: 11/16/05

Brian Frieze, a freshman geography major, was setting up his computer for the fall semester and had downloaded the new anti-virus updates.

He then restarted his computer for the installation to be complete.

When his computer started up again, he discovered a virus had corrupted his computer, along with four or five other residents' computers in Carman Hall.

The computer lab in Carman Hall restored his computer to its original programming.

Last year, it was common for Eastern's network to crash because of computer viruses. Eastern decided to invest in a new program to stop that from happening again.

This semester there have been significantly less crashes than last year.

The Clean Access system started out as another system called Persigo. Then Cisco systems bought out the company that owned Persigo and changed it to Cisco Clean Access.

Because Eastern uses programs provided by Cisco, the school traded its old program for the new Clean Access program.

The program works by identifying whether or not the user's computer has the most up to date virus protection and other critical updates.

With less than three weeks in the semester, it seems that the system has worked.

Chat Chatterji, assistant vice-president of Information Technology, said Clean Access has been very helpful in preventing crashes and treating viruses.

Students around campus are complaining less about problems with viruses on their computer.

While Clean Access prevents computers that are not up-to-date or have viruses from logging on to Eastern's network, it does not stop spyware from getting on to a person's computer and damaging.

Evan Couzens, a junior English major, works at the computer lab in Stevenson Hall said that they deal with 10 to 15 people a week who have problems with their computers.

"Spyware tracks what you do, where you go, and can cause pop-ups" said Sundance Hopkins, a junior special education major, who also works in the Stevenson Computer Lab.

Spyware, however, acts differently than a regular computer virus.

A virus gets on a person's computer and multiplies, whereas spyware just stays on a computer and causes pop-ups which can slow down the performance of the computer.

A lot of spyware programs enter computer by "piggy-backing" on other harmless looking programs.

File sharing programs are the worst offenders of having spyware.

Services like Limewire or Kazaa, where students can download music and movies, have been known to have spyware programs on their movies. So when students download them, they get a load of spyware programs.

Hopkins recommends several ways to prevent a computer from receiving spyware. "Don't open malicious e-mails, and don't go to websites your not comfortable visiting," Hopkins said.

If a person does have spyware on their computer, he or she could get it removed using websites Trend Micro.