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Utilizing Discord to Create a Learning Space for Cybersecurity Courses

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Abstract

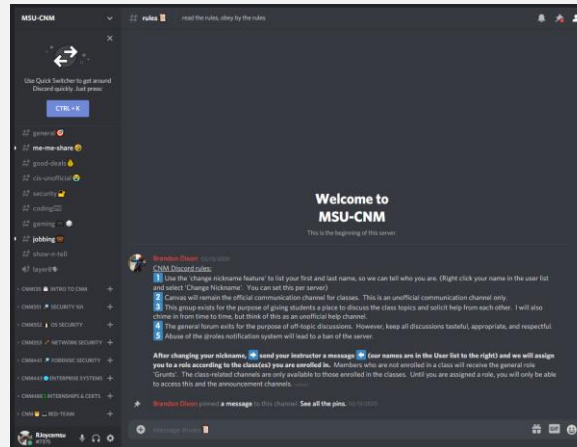
With the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, traditional pedagogical techniques had to evolve to a new flexible virtual environment to help students continue their education and have an online learning community. The tool that faculty selected in the Cybersecurity and Network Management (CNM) program at Murray State University (MSU) was Discord. Discord is a streaming and instant message platform that is popular with gamers. Discord was utilized in the CNM program to create a channel of communication between the faculty and students. Most students already had Discord installed on their devices for gaming, thus, they felt comfortable using this platform for their classes as well. By using Discord, the CNM faculty could give students real time assistance with cybersecurity Labs, and help them master activities and cybersecurity concepts in a time of enforced social distancing. While using Discord for academic purposes was the focus of the tool, it also evolved to a social online learning community with channels created in in Discord where students could discuss security topics, gaming, and just general topics. Using a tool like Discord to support the CNM program has been essential in helping students continue their educational experience and foster a strong virtual learning community.

Introduction

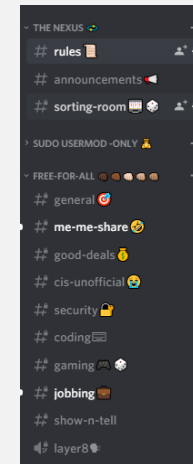
To maintain communications with students during COVID-19 pandemic, the CNM faculty deployed a Discord server to communicate with students for classes and labs. The discord server was configured where students must identify themselves to get access to the general channels. These general channels include a general chat, meme, job posting, and many more that all the students can interact. For the classes we used the role-based access control that is built into Discord to grant students rights to access chat and voice channels that corresponds to the classes they are enrolled in. This process is a manual one where the CNM faculty are acting as the administrators to the discord server.

Discord Configuration

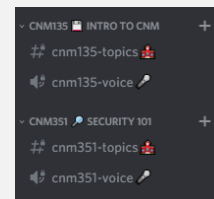
Welcome



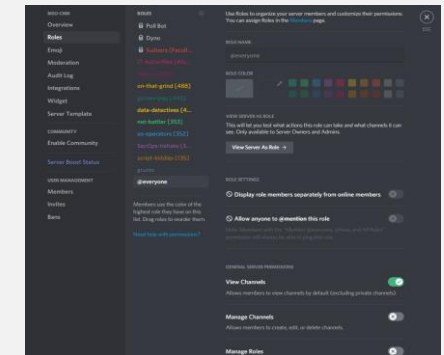
General



Class Specific



Roles



Conclusion

Having Discord implemented in the CNM program has been a success for both the faculty and students. Managing a Discord server can be a time consuming but well worth the effort. The CNM students had the following feedback:

- A meaningful experience with another culture is just a message away.
- Being able to communicate with faculty in real time was great.
- More comfortable way to communicate with faculty and other students.
- Easier to use than LMS

References

[1]Discord platform, <https://discord.com/>, 2021

