SMU gets Microsoft help on security curriculum development

Tie-up is software giant's first in the world with an academic institution

BY ONG BOON KIAH

An information security course at the Singapore Management University (SMU) has been enriched with Microsoft-developed content, and more courses at the university are expected to bear the imprint of the tech giant.

This new SMU-Microsoft partnership was announced this week at Governmentware 2008, an infocomm security seminar supported by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA).

The jointly developed courses will be offered to students at the SMU’s School of Information Systems (SIS).

When the announcement was made, the first fruits of this partnership have already been served. The university recently incorporated new content into an upper year elective course offered at the SIS.

This course, called “Advanced Information Security and Trust”, teaches students how to design security protocols that protect real-world settings such as e-banking, among other topics.

Next year, more co-developed content are expected to be incorporated into other courses offered at the SIS.

Steven Miller, Dean of the SIS, said that Microsoft had approached the university about the partnership. He noted that Microsoft has been encouraged by the MHA to share its expertise on information security with tertiary institutions here, especially on its knowledge surrounding secure software development.

He said that “several hundred” SMU students each year will benefit from the new course materials. “As we move relevant parts of these Microsoft security examples into more of our courses, all our students will benefit,” he said.

Microsoft Singapore managing director Jessica Tan said that the SMU tie-up will benefit Microsoft in two ways. Firstly, it will help educate Microsoft customers on issues relating to security, privacy, reliability and sound business practices.

Secondly, the partnership will let Microsoft interact more closely with users of its technology. The ongoing feedback that these users provide can help toughen new Microsoft offerings.

According to Microsoft, its partnership with SMU is the first of its kind in the world with an academic institution.

For the university, working with commercial vendors to enrich its curriculum has been an ongoing exercise. Besides Microsoft, the university’s key collaborators include SAP, Oracle, SAS, Infosys, IBM and Tibco.