Student Enrollment Services Integration
Recommendation

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Prepared by Student Information Systems (SIS) Executive Committee

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Context:

Like many universities, Indiana University relies on aging stand-alone legacy student information systems. The admissions information system was developed in the early 1980’s and few enhancements have been made since that time. While more efforts had been made to enhance FAMS and BARS, the information systems for financial aid and bursar activities (which had also been developed in the 1980’s), they no longer provide the range of functionality required to meet federal, state, and institutional requirements to serve prospective students, current students, or the fiduciary responsibilities of the university. The registration and records system had received more attention since it was first developed in the 1980’s, but even this system relies on an outdated programming language that is no longer taught, and it will not function in the client server web-based environment to which most universities are moving. The need to move to a student information environment was not a choice; it was a necessity.

After considerable deliberation, the university made the decision to move to purchase the People Soft Student Information System (PS). While People Soft has its critics, the problems experienced by Big Ten institutions and other universities implementing PS are not unlike the difficulties other campuses have experienced with ERP systems offered by competitor vendors. These new generations of SIS products provide more functionality, but are also more complex, and none of them offer the precise set of functions that have been slowly programmed into existing legacy systems over two decades.

Indiana University has undertaken an ambitious task of implementing the PS SIS modules for a projected budget of $25,000,000. Many of our Big Ten peers have budgets that are two to four times the size of our budget, sometimes for one campus, not seven. The differences in our projected budgets are the result of several factors.

1. IU has a history of achieving greater efficiencies than all of our peers.
2. A strong IT unit, along with skilled functional users, with the expertise to provide strong leadership for the project.
3. IU was not a beta site for PS, hence many of the initial problems encountered with a new product have been resolved so that we do not have to bear the staff costs of helping to solve problems in the early versions of this product.
4. Our budget primarily focuses on the hardware and software costs of implementing PS, it was never intended to include the staff time of all the functional users in student services areas who will help implement the PS product.

PS is also a much more integrated information system than any of our existing legacy student systems. Indeed, this is one of the most attractive characteristics of this product. With this greater level of integration come greater complexities in managing and maintaining our student information systems. As the implications of the PS information systems became increasingly apparent, the SIS Steering Committee recognized that we had to reorganize some of our back room student service operations to optimize the software. In addition, we realized that if we did not do this, that the additional costs that come with the greater functionality would cause the university to spend more money on student services. This was not an attractive option.

While we are not privy to the thinking that went into the creation of the president’s decision to create a Task Force in Integrating Administrative Services, it appears that senior administrators at the University recognized a similar set of issues and opportunities. The Task Force on Integration, with the assistance of consultants from Arthur Andersen, also started to look for ways to optimize efficiency and effectiveness in the new student services environment to which Indiana University is moving. Working with the consultants has already paid dividends for the SIS project. They have correctly noted that for profit businesses usually begin the process of re-organizing administrative processes in advance of implementing business technologies and that universities typically do not do this, and as a result, have great difficulty implementing new technology solutions and gaining optimal benefits from them. The Task Force on Integration and the consulting team is enabling IU to avoid such pitfalls.

Short Term and Long Term Goals:

The goal of the SIS project is to provide increased functionality and efficiency to Indiana University in the areas of admissions recruitment, financial aid, bursar, and registration and records. The short-term goals include...
maintaining the necessary functions of the existing legacy systems while simultaneously implementing the new system. Most businesses, when implementing a new technology, do not anticipate savings during the implementation process because they are maintaining two systems and there is a learning curve associated with the new system. This is an important point. For Indiana University to successfully implement this new system, we need to be realistic. Our long-term goals must be to find both efficiencies and increased effectiveness. During the implementation process, sustaining current levels of functionality and avoiding the increased costs that our peers in the Big Ten have incurred will be a strong indicator of success. During the implementation process, however, SIS leadership needs to be looking ahead for opportunities for savings post implementation. Long-term, the transformation of staff knowledge will be a key to the success of organizational transformation. Many routine tasks will be automated by the system. In addition, the management of the system and its processes will require more knowledgeable staff. Therefore, we need to provide training and staff development in order to transform the organization to include more knowledge workers and fewer workers performing routine tasks.

Remaining Issues:

As we move forward a number of uncertainties remain. For example, a quick review of the human resources in the student services areas will demonstrate that the greatest concentrations of functional staff reside on the Bloomington and Indianapolis campuses. Simply generating a list like this can make integration look easy and painless. This is misleading and potentially risky. In the area of undergraduate domestic admissions for example, the Bloomington campus, for example, has just 11 professional staff. Approximately 1.8 of our best staff (on a base of 11) is already allocated PS with no backfill. Our sister Big Ten institutions, Purdue has 17 professionals dedicated to undergraduate domestic admissions. IUPUI professional staff is smaller than that of IUB. Given the growing challenges faced in Indianapolis to be more selective and to manage the impact of the community college, the general sense is that IUPUI needs more staff not less. Nevertheless, the IUPUI admissions office has also allocated 1.5 FTE out of current resources to the SIS project. In the area of financial aid, it is important to keep in mind that the financial aid offices on the two large campuses serve new and returning undergraduate and graduate students. The point here is simply to reinforce the difficulty of reducing staff for savings during implementation, maintaining legacy systems, while also reallocating staff to a new integrated systems. IUB has already allocated nearly a million dollars of staff to the SIS project. Indianapolis has also made substantial contributions of staff. Indeed, we may discover the need to fund some back-fill positions during the implementation process. If this is necessary, all campuses should share costs proportionately. Right now the two large campuses are providing all the functional user expertise for the SIS without backfill support.

As we move through the SIS implementation and creating a new integrated student services unit, some realities need to be acknowledged. It is tempting just to focus on those list of staff on the two large campuses and say they can do everything they currently do for their respective campuses and simply do them for the other campuses too at no additional costs; as a result everybody wins. Each campus has different needs that are the product of the competitive environment in which they operate as well as the unique mix of programs they offer. Not all campuses have the same needs or priorities for functionality in a student information system. Integration will inevitably create a waiting list for extending the functionality of the new system. Indeed, there is already a waiting list for extending the current system and even campuses with the money to fund such initiatives are being told the projects cannot be undertaken because of scarce programming resources. These are realities that exist in the new system and will persist in the new system. We must keep in mind that our goal is not just to implement the system; rather, the system is intended to enable all campuses to be more effective.

Thus it will be necessary to keep in mind some measures of fairness. As savings are found, after implementation, it is suggested that they be returned to the campuses on a basis that is proportionate to what each campus provides the greatest number of staff for the new integrated unit. In addition, if additional resources are required during implementation, it is suggested that staff or funding be provided from all campuses, not just from the two large campuses, since all campuses will benefit from the new system.

Finally, it is worth noting that a number of projects and ideas that are not directly associated with the SIS are being discussed that could, nevertheless, impact our ability to find savings in the SIS project. The e-commerce project could place requirements on the SIS project so that the two initiatives work hand-in-hand, which in turn could increase costs for the SIS. Electronic imaging could further enhance integration in some areas of admissions and registration and records, but like e-commerce, this is not currently part of SIS. Finally, some of
the graduate and professional schools are considering updating or for the first time purchasing student systems in areas like admissions. Much analysis remains to be done, but if the SIS project team determines that the most efficient institutional strategy was to extend PS to graduate and professional schools, this could increase the costs of the project but also result in cost savings to the same schools and programs. These kinds of possibilities may influence the future cost structure of the SIS.

The responsibility and accountability for the implementation of a new set of integrated units will be a key factor in the success of this transformation. Without effective leadership in the implementation of this model, working in a collaborative fashion, it will not be successful.

We are in the process of analyzing the allocation of FTE and we will continue this consistent with the deliberative, collaborative approach we have taken to this point. Success in integration will depend on the confidence of the people affected. While our time line does not permit us to have results ready for the task force in the next week or two, we will continue our project and we should have results which might be shared in mid-January. We will concentrate on looking at the current student services organizations and their functions and the proposed model and the functions, and analyze the differences between the two, including FTE and overall costs.
Student Enrollment Services Integration Conceptual Model

Integrated Campus Student Enrollment Services
(formerly Registrar, Bursar, Admissions, Financial Aid)

Management Group (3-4 people)
Operations Committee (8-10 people)
Academic Policy Committee

Integrated Student Enrollment Services Center

Student Self-Service

University-wide Roll-up and Coordination
SIS Systems Management
Training and Support
University-wide Policy Interpretation/Implementation
Compliance and Reporting
Core & Common Services
Value-added, Customized, Campus-Specific Services

Campus Services:
1) functions that remain at the campus
2) all interaction with students and faculty, presenting the human face
3) campus level policies and procedures
Description of Conceptual Model:

This section outlines the foundation for integrating student services in such a manner that it will enable Indiana University to take full advantage of PS SIS and minimize expenditures. Included in this document are a series of recommendations for creating an integrated student services unit that would manage the PS student information system, the backbone of the SIS project. This unit will be created out of existing resources located primarily on the Bloomington and Indianapolis campuses. This new unit will achieve efficiencies by providing a range of services for all campuses in the IU system. The precise number of staff necessary to achieve our ambitious goals is not completely delineated. It goes beyond the ability of Task Force or the SIS Steering Committee to describe in detail this new organization and the principles under which it will operate. While we delineate the basic administrative structure, the full list of services that should be centrally provided and those that should be provided by each campus needs to be added in coming months.

Integrated Student Enrollment Services Center -- provides the following functions:

- University-wide roll-up and coordination
- SIS systems management
- Training and support
- University-wide policy interpretation and implementation
- Compliance and reporting

Core and Common Operations:

- Processing of applications
- Record-keeping of student records
- Reporting
- Processing of financial aid and loans, packaging, awarding, notifications
- Billing and accounts receivables (working closely with Treasury for cash mgmt)
- Processing of grades, transcripts, etc.

Ensure timely turnaround and responsiveness to campuses, as directed by the Board of Directors and Campus Advisory Council.

Integrated Campus Student Enrollment Services – bursar, registrar, financial aid, and admissions are integrated into one organization (e.g. student enrollment services), and include “generalists” for breadth of information, and “specialists” for depth; this integration may be handled differently at each campus. Provides the following functions:

- Face-to-face support for students and faculty
- Campus policy interpretation and communication of policy to Integrated Service Center

Campus Specific Operations:

- Processing of applications
- Record-keeping of student records
- Reporting
- Processing of financial aid and loans, packaging, awarding, notifications
- Special handling, time sensitive processes, exception handling

Determination of policy, procedure, timing, and product for operations performed for campuses by Integrated Service Center

NOTES:

A. Organizational Structure: We recommend that an AVP for Enrollment Services be established. This new AVP position would report to the VP for Academic Affairs. The AVP would be responsible for managing the central services that will be provided to each campus in areas such as admissions, financial aid, and registration records. The AVP would also work with the VP for Academic Affairs in emerging areas of importance such as the role of the master course list (maintained in the SIS) and how it interfaces with statewide discussion about course transferability and articulation within the IU system as well as with other public two- and four-year institutions within Indiana.

B. Management and Governance of Centralized Enrollment Services: A Management Group will be created to manage the strategic aspects of the new organization. The Management Group will be comprised of the AVP, the senior enrollment officer of the two large campuses, and senior enrollment officer from one of the smaller campuses (this position would rotate every two years among the smaller
This model will be new to Indiana University because it will not be a centralized office with hierarchical relationships but a group of people with shared responsibilities organizing their work and time to accomplish multiple tasks according to shared objectives and with an understanding that we must emphasize the common good, and prioritize strategically. The 3-4 people on the management team will need to be collaborative and work closely with many constituents.

C. Operational Management: There will also be a need for this new organization to focus on operational issues. An Operations Committee will also be created. The Operations Committee would meet four to six times a years and more often when needed. It would be comprised of the new AVP, the senior administrators in the functions of admissions, financial aid, bursar¹, and registration and records from the two large campuses, and a rotating representative from each of these offices from the smaller campuses (the rotating members would serve for two years).

D. Academic Policy Making: This more centralized organization will change the academic decision-making environment at Indiana University. In the current information environment, campuses with the staff resources to work on our legacy systems, faculty, academic, and/or financial administrators could enact policies and put them into practice relatively independently. For example, movements to flat fees, grade forgiveness, or changes in campus-based financial aid initiatives could be approved and enacted in this more decentralized environment. In this new centralized environment and with a press to keep operational expenses to a minimum, there will be a change in the roles and discretion of faculty and administrators to enact changes.

Smaller campuses in the past have frequently found themselves in situations where they had enacted a policy change that could not be put into place because they lacked the resources to make the changes in the student information system. This forced them to make their requests and then “wait in line” until sufficient programming resources were available. In a more centralized environment all campuses will experience more of these kinds of situations.

Therefore it is important to create a policy making group comprised of faculty appointed by the UFC, a representative group of academic administrators, and members of the Management Group. This group should meet quarterly.

¹ The precise organizational location of the functions of the bursar remains uncertain, as this office is both a financial office and a student services office.