

Inside this issue:

- A new Units Database, with a little help from our friends
- Pooling resources
- Automating workflows
- Rewriting the rulebook
- Timetabling enters Phase 2
- UNESIS Prototype demo – Win a Palm organiser!

Callista clients pool resources

Aside from UNE, many Australian universities have implemented, or are implementing, the Callista student system. We have our choice of student system in common with Edith Cowan, Murdoch, Deakin, Monash, LaTrobe, Uni of Canberra, Uni of Western Australia, Uni of Western Sydney, QUT, Charles Darwin Uni (formerly NTU) and the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. Together we make up the Callista Client Strategy Group (CCSG) – Callista licensees working with the vendor to determine future developments for the Callista student system.

CCSG gatherings give members a chance to meet with one another and with Callista representatives. Julianne Paltridge, Assistant Registrar – Systems, has been representing UNE at CCSG meetings. She explains their benefits: 'First, many universities that

continued page 2

Countdown to launch...8 months



Collaboration to improve Units Database

Working from the old Units Database, the Student Information Transition Team (*SITT – see our November UPdate*) worked hard to clean up the data and publish the 2004 Handbook in December. And with that big effort, they've said farewell to the old FileMaker Pro database. It's served its purpose over the years, but the University is ready for a new and improved version.

So now we face another challenge: porting the units data to a stable, robust platform ready for integration with the Callista student system. A potential deal with Queensland University of Technology (possibly also involving Edith Cowan University) means we may not have to face that challenge alone.

IT Director Peter Edwards (*see our May '03 UPdate*) is brokering the deal. He, Steve Campbell (Project Manager for the new **Units & Courses Repository, UCR**, a.k.a. 'Units Database') and Julianne Paltridge (Assistant Registrar – Systems) spoke with a number of universities last year, including QUT and Edith Cowan. They quickly found many common issues.

QUT is keen to upgrade its current Filemaker Pro database. Edith Cowan has already built a sophisticated units database, but is considering porting it to a more robust platform such as Oracle, as it's an industrial-strength database management system. Possibly taking Edith Cowan's database as our starting point, we are hoping to collaborate with QUT to develop a better, Oracle-based solution, and then perhaps share the results with Edith Cowan.

The UCR project team has already begun the process of recreating in Oracle the functionality of UNE's existing FileMaker Pro database. Steve Campbell explains that Oracle is the logical choice for the units database. 'It's industry standard, robust, and will allow us to interface the Units & Courses Repository with our existing enterprise systems, as well as with the Callista student system. It also gives us much greater control over the quality of the data, since it includes powerful field validation tools.'

The team will integrate the new database with the student system (as two sibling systems that help make up UNESIS) and other systems such as electronic reserves room and online examinations. Online booklists went live in December, allowing students to check book requirements for their units on the web.

For system users, the new Oracle-based Units & Courses Repository will look much like the old FileMaker Pro database. The biggest difference will be in how users access the database – instead of connecting to the data via FileMaker Pro, users will retrieve it via online forms. Steve will be visiting with system users in January and February to familiarise them with the web-based system.



Callista clients pool resources

Continued from page 1

have already successfully launched their Callista student systems are more than happy to share their experiences with those of us still working on implementation. Second, those universities that are still in the implementation phase, or in the planning phase, can benefit from pooling their resources and collaborating on development with other universities in the same situation. Finally, these meetings are an opportunity for universities to meet with the software vendor and establish priorities for future development.'

This collaborative approach marks a break from the traditional 'hard sell' relationship that many system vendors have with their clients. Rather than blindly pursuing its own development priorities, Callista negotiates priorities with its customers.

'The group might go to Callista with a wish list of ten items, but they may be able to fulfill only eight within the given timeframe. So they'll ask us where our priorities lie and then direct their resources accordingly.'

Julianne, along with BPI Manager Rick Nelson and IT Director Peter Edwards, attended a CCSG conference in Perth last November. The meeting dealt with several important issues facing CCSG members, including development priorities for Release 7 (the software version that UNE is likely to launch this September), additional functionality for managing graduations, and new interfaces for Tertiary Admissions Centre data and transcripts.

Concerns raised by the Nelson reforms were also addressed at the conference. Changes in government regulations mean potentially significant programming changes to student systems. It's easier for universities to tackle the challenge posed by these reforms if they work together. So CCSG members have gone to great lengths to pool their resources effectively – one uni has even lent staff to Callista.

'[Callista CEO] Peter Langkamp recognises the strength of knowledge

continued page 3

E-workflows for Unit & Course development

The most powerful database in the world is only as useful as the data it holds. The old saying applies: 'garbage in, garbage out.' While we're excited about the direction the Units Database is headed, we need to ensure that the data that goes into it is accurate, up-to-date, and complete at each step that a unit or course goes through in its development process.

Consultant Graeme Burton (*see July 2003 Update*) is analysing UNE's unit approval process to develop an electronic workflow for checking the quality of the data through every step. Workflow (in the IT context) uses electronic systems to manage and monitor business processes. It allows the flow of work between individuals and/or departments to be defined and tracked.

'Approving a new unit is a very complicated process, and without checks in place there is a high risk that it won't be recorded properly in the database,' Graeme explains.

'A unit might begin life as one academic's bright idea, but before it gets approved, it will need to pass approval by the Head of School, the faculty Teaching and Learning Committee, the University-wide Teaching and Learning Committee, the Academic Board, and UNE Council. Important data such as unit description, teaching mode, and graduate attributes all get recorded along the way. An electronic (or e-)workflow will help us guarantee that all the units data are recorded correctly and in the right place, and the people involved in the approvals process are proactively informed of what's going on and where their input will be required.'

Many universities are struggling to manage their units databases with outdated technology and inefficient business processes. UNE has the opportunity to develop a product that can be marketed more widely in the tertiary sector. Adding the element of e-workflow to a robust new database will help ensure the integrity of the data, and add to the market appeal of the new product – whether potential buyers are other universities or Callista, to offer as part of its student system package. ◉

Re-writing the rulebook, electronically

One of the features that attracted the SIS Analysis Team to Callista in 2002 was its 'Rules Engine' – an interface that will allow the project team to build course rules into the student system using Boolean logic (the logic – expressed using the operators AND, OR, and NOT – that applies to variables which have only two possible values, TRUE or FALSE). Within the Rules Engine, we can construct rules at the unit level, unit set level, and course level, eventually facilitating student self-enrolment.

Rules at unit level include those involving pre- and co-requisites, and modes of study; at unit set level, patterns of enrolment (for instance, major sequences); at course level, those involving the number of 100- and 300-level units a student must enrol in to complete a course, and rules pertinent to graduation.

Unit level rules will go live with the UNESIS launch in September, with unit set and course rules going live later. 'Building all the unit and course rules into the system is a big undertaking,' Trevor Edgar, UNESIS Business Manager, explains. 'We're entering

continued page 3

Re-writing the rulebook

Continued from page 2

the entire University curriculum into the system, working from rules that haven't always been recorded consistently.'

Rather than rushing to get unit set and course rules ready to go live in September, we're taking the opportunity to standardise rule wording and structure across the University as we go. We'll be working closely with the schools, faculties, and Student Administration to update, maintain, and review rules and courses.

'The rules are intended to be read by students, so as well as automating them, it's important that every rule is worded in a way that is meaningful to students. You can't just bung the rules in "as is". They need to be interpreted, so when students apply or breach a rule, they understand what has happened.'

Trevor and the other Business Analysis team members will be conducting student focus groups this year to ensure the rules not only work, but are also written in 'student friendly language'.

'Some other universities running Callista's Student Management System even go to the extent of downloading their rules from the system straight into their student handbook,' Trevor says. 'That's a future possibility for UNE, too.'

Timetabling moves into second phase

Online timetables for Semester 1 '04 internal lectures marked the completion of the first phase of the Timetabling system implementation in October last year. Now in its second phase, the project will produce online timetables for Semester 2 '04 internal lectures *and* for April external residential schools.

The new, computerised res school timetable will be a major advance from the current paper-based system, improving efficiency and accuracy while avoiding double handling. Residential Schools Officer Rosie Fuller will continue to prepare the timetables, but instead of wading through a slush pile of printouts and scribbled notes, she'll enter the timetable directly into the system, accelerating its availability to students and staff.

The other major items for phase 2 of the implementation are online room bookings and a tracking system for 'pooled resources' – generic non-fixed equipment such as overhead projectors and lecterns. These developments will not only help the schools ensure that suitable venues and equipment are made available for teaching, but will also help Facilities Management Services to identify where to direct resources such as heating in winter. There's also the potential for unused rooms to be made available for commercial purposes, generating additional revenue for the University.

The Timetabling project team will make a series of presentations in February, explaining what users can expect from the new system. For more information, contact the Timetabling team via email at timetabling@une.edu.au or by phone on extension 3218.

Win a Palm Zire!

By attending a SIS prototype demonstration in February you will go in the draw to win a Palm Zire 21 handheld organiser. See [page 4](#) for details.

Callista clients pool resources

Continued from page 2

found in the CCSG,' Julianne explains, 'and he wants to make sure that it is used as productively as possible.'

In that spirit, UNE has started a dialogue with Murdoch University in WA; the two universities share the same product mix of Callista Student, Finance One, and Concept HR systems.

Julianne highlights that collaboration between UNE and Murdoch will have major benefits for both universities. 'We're particularly keen to work with them to improve the interface between our finance and student systems.'

A number of CCSG members recently launched their new student systems successfully. Quick to acknowledge the hard work that goes into a launch – especially in technical development and restructuring business processes – Julianne highlights that the most recent success belongs to Charles Darwin University. From all of us on the UNESIS team, congrats to our NT colleagues for their successful November launch.

The final word from Julianne: 'It's not an easy task to pull off, but by working closely with Callista and the other institutions, UNE is going to launch a great student system come September.'

News from the SIS-terhood Farewell, Julianne

Having come to UNE last year to fill in for Trevor Edgar while he serves as the UNESIS Business Manager, Julianne Paltridge is now set to take the next step in her university career, moving back to Monash in February to serve as Project Officer in their Services and Systems Group.

Julianne obviously made an impression in her previous consulting work for Monash, causing them to

continued page 4

News from the SIS-terhood

Continued from page 3

come looking for her again. Her breadth of knowledge of QTAC, UAC, new systems implementations and change management (as well as her experience with UQ, UWS and now UNE) means that she'll continue to be a valuable university resource.

The major challenge she'll face in her new job will be effecting changes to Monash's business processes and student system necessitated by the Nelson reforms.

It's been great working with Julianne and drawing on her years of experience in student admin and systems implementation. We wish her all the best in her new job in Melbourne. ☉



Julianne Paltridge



Leon Braun

Congratulations, Leon

The UNESIS team is pleased to have enticed Leon Braun to stay with us after having completed his BA in Communication Studies at UNE last semester.

As a student employee, Leon has helped us with communications and web site development. We are delighted to announce that he'll be continuing to work with us in 2004 as a full time member of the UNESIS team. ☉

Callista reorganisation

The UNESIS office will farewell Callista Project Manager Dave Naylor some time in the first quarter of 2004. Dave is moving to Geelong to take up the position of Callista Consultancy Services Manager. He will retain Callista responsibility for UNESIS, however, and expects to work closely with his replacement in Armidale. ☉

February system prototype demonstrations

Our Business Analysts have completed development of the first cut of prototyping the new SIS, and invite you to a February demonstration.

If you weren't able to join us in the 2002 SIS Analysis sessions, this is your opportunity to take a good first look. If you did participate in 2002, you probably remember a bit from both vendors' systems, and could use a refresher on what you can expect of your new SIS in September. A major difference between what you saw then and what you'll see in February is that the demo system is configured to work with UNE's business practices, using UNE terminology and data.

There will be three demonstrations during the week of 16 February – take your pick of Monday, Wednesday or Friday morning.

But wait, there's more...

In case you need more incentive, your attendance at one of the sessions will put you in the draw to win a new **Palm Zire 21 handheld organiser** that the ITD shop has scored as part of a promotion. UNESIS will help us all organise student information and timetabling; a new Palm organiser will help you organise your own info.



Palm Australia says, 'Intuitive software makes staying on top of your life a snap. Keep track of your schedule with reminders and alarms for appointments. Carry thousands of contacts – family, friends, co-workers, doctors, emergency contacts – and always have your important addresses and phone numbers at your fingertips. Keep your to-do list with you and check things off as you go. Synchronises with Outlook so you can use the calendar, contacts, tasks and notes you already have.'

We think it's a pretty good incentive; in fact, there's more than one SIS-ter who would have been very pleased to win it, but we can't have it, because UNESIS Project Director Peter Edwards has decreed that this super prize is not for us, but for YOU.

So mark your calendar now to remind you to attend one of the following sessions. If you're lucky, your new Palm will help you remember future sessions.

Plan to join us from **10.00am to noon:**

<u>day</u>	<u>date</u>	<u>building</u>	<u>room</u>
Monday	16 Feb	EHPS (E7)	111
Wednesday	18 Feb	EBL (W42)	LT4
Friday	20 Feb	EHPS (E7)	111

See you at one of the demonstrations! ☉

Brain cramp?

Have something to share with us, but can't remember how to reach us? Send an email to unesis@pobox.une.edu.au, use the 'Contact Us' link on www.une.edu.au/unesis/ or call **extension 3328**. We look forward to your comments and suggestions, and will get back to you as quickly as we can with answers to your questions. ~ your UNESIS-ers