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Meet your new SIS-ers (and farewell some old friends)

This month we bid adieu to Carla Gregg, welcome her replacement Anthony Rologas, and put names to a few of the new faces you may see around the UNESIS office...

It was with sadness that the UNESIS team bid farewell to Project stalwart Carla Gregg last month, when she departed Armidale's frosty climes for sunny far north Queensland.

Carla played an important role in the project from its inception. She came on board in June 2002 for the analysis process, facilitating the unique on-site demonstration and analysis sessions conducted with the short-listed vendors. She was lured back for the implementation of the new system, providing invaluable support and leadership in communications and change management. Carla started this newsletter, and it was Carla who championed the name 'UNESIS' to describe the University of New England Student Information System.

UNESIS Project Director Peter Edwards said: "Carla has a great track record in change management in private enterprise, and she was able to bring those skills to UNE and contribute greatly to the Project. We're really going to miss her."

Carla will be especially missed by her friends and co-workers, who loved her infectious energy and straight shooting

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New system for residences

The University residences have settled on a computer system to run their office processes, accounts, and reservations.



The University signed a contract with software vendor StarNet Systems on 28 March. StarNet's proposal includes a purpose-built residential management system and an

upgrade to the existing residential telephone network.

The Residences have been using the Location Management module of the Banner Student system to manage their businesses since 1994. That functionality will be unavailable from September, when UNESIS goes live and the University no longer conducts its business on the Banner Student System.

Knowing that they would need a replacement system, the Heads of Residences approached the IT Directorate, which put out a call for expressions of interest in March of last year. Five vendors expressed interest; however only two vendors had purpose built systems that met the University's needs. They were invited to tender in a Request for Proposal.

In the end Melbourne-based StarNet Systems won the day — their specialised software came by far the closest to fulfilling the needs of UNE's expansive residential system. Their StarRez residential management system is already used by many other Australian universities, including Uni of Canberra, ANU, Flinders, Deakin, and LaTrobe.

UNE has seven University residences and it is important that they run a common system. Of the short-listed software, StarRez was the best system to facilitate cooperation between the different residences.

Master of Austin College Dr. Alan McKenzie described the decision to purchase StarRez as a matter of confidence.

'We need to encourage trust between the colleges. Therefore we felt it was important to purchase a single, professionally-developed product that could be used across the residences. We want to keep inter-collegiate competition on the sports field, and out of the business.'

The new system will be installed in July, which is when residential enquiries usually start flooding in. In addition to taking residential applications via StarRez, staff in the residences will be able to register student enquiries via the Callista Student system. This is important, because the colleges are the first point of call for many prospective students — some parents try to secure a residential place for their children before they've

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“y’all” Southern style. Everybody at the project wishes Carla the very best in all her future endeavours.

Anthony Rologas has taken over Carla's change management role. Many of you no doubt recognise Anthony's surname—his late father was one of the original ‘Seven Brothers’ who migrated to Armidale from Cyprus in the 1960s and earned a reputation in the town for their successful business ventures and generous acts of philanthropy.

But don't let that fool you into thinking he's just trading off the family name. Anthony brings to the Project impressive qualifications and experience in training and change management. He graduated Arts/Law from the Australian National University in 1995, and worked for eight years as a training officer with Australian Customs Service, eventually becoming a manager of the National Human Resource Development Section. Most recently Anthony spent a year in the Philippines as an Australian Youth Ambassador, helping to set up a radio-based distance education program to train local government officials.

Anthony says he's excited about getting out there and meeting everybody who is involved with the Project, and is looking forward to continuing Carla's good work.



Carla Gregg



Anthony Rologas

Brian Cameron will be familiar to many readers as the Manager of Applications Group, but Brian recently added another hat to his collection when he assumed the role of Timetabling Project Manager. Brian has relieved Rick Nelson of overall responsibility for the Timetabling Project, freeing Rick up to concentrate on the Student Admin reorganisation.

Sue Chapman is visiting us from Griffith University in Queensland, bringing with her almost ten years experience in computerised timetabling at universities. Her secondment is part of a collaboration between Griffith and UNE on timetabling and she'll be with us

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New System for residences

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received an offer letter from the University! The Residences are therefore an important place to collect student information, and StarRez will have interfaces to collect personal data from Callista Student and send financial data to Finance One.

In addition to the residential management components of the StarRez system—a front office management system, events management module, asset maintenance tools, and a Web access module—StarNet will be upgrading the colleges' PABX telephone system (This will no doubt be like pleasant hold music to the ears of those who suffered through the scrambled lines and disconnections that occurred when the University's phone system briefly failed earlier this month).

‘We expect that StarRez will make our lives much easier,’ said Dr. McKenzie. ‘It will greatly facilitate our office processes, and the Web access module will eventually make students much more self-reliant. And what's great is that we've been able to buy this software from an Australian company with an international reputation.’ ◉

Timetabling update

After a bumpy start in first semester, the timetabling team is on the way to having a much-improved timetable ready for second semester.

At the moment timetabling staff are busily keying into the Syllabus Plus timetabling system all the information gathered from academics last month. In early May the team will send this data back out to the academics and admin staff who provided it, for confirmation. In this phase of the timetabling process, they're not actually too concerned about the When and Where of lectures and tutorials, but rather with making sure they have a clear picture of who is teaching what and what sort of resources they need to teach it.

Once they have confirmed these details they will feed them into Syllabus Plus, which will match teaching requirements to times and venues. The draft timetable the system produces will then go out for comment; any revisions will be taken in before the final timetable is released in late May.

Problems arose last semester when the team was deciding which combinations of units should be guaranteed to be clash-free. They eventually decided to guarantee groupings that were historically popular (a popular grouping was defined as any combination of units that was taken by more than five students in a single semester), and to cross-reference this data with a survey to see which combinations teaching staff required to be clash free. Unfortunately some of the data collected was incomplete, or else came in too late to be useful, resulting in unnecessary clashes for some students in Semester 1.

This time around, the Timetabling Team has put a number of additional checks in place to ensure the quality of the data used to prepare the Semester 2 timetable. Firstly, they have introduced

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Timetabling update

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the notion of 'programs of study' from the handbook to make sure that compulsory sequences are clash-free. A program of study is a compulsory sequence of units required to finish a particular award. Secondly, they will be conducting a physical audit of all the data before releasing the draft and final timetables later this month.

As in Semester 1, they are guaranteeing a one-hour lunch break for all teaching staff, and will also do their best to accommodate academics' individual 'soft preferences' for lecture and tutorial times.

Timetabling Project Manager Brian Cameron emphasises the need for the continued involvement of academics in collecting and verifying timetabling data: 'We really appreciated all the feedback and suggestions we got in first semester for improving the timetable—strongly worded though some of it was! I'd like to encourage academics and admin staff to continue to give us feedback, and also to stress how important it is for them to get back to us as quickly as possible when we send out requests for information. We depend on teaching staff to let us know what they need in order to produce timetables that best cater for them and their students. We didn't always ask the right questions last semester, and the answers were sometimes less forthcoming than they could have been, but this time around we have much improved measures in place to ensure the quality of the data going into the system, and we've gone all out to involve teaching staff in the timetabling process, so we expect to end up with a much better result.' ☉

Timetabling Team changes

There have been a number of changes to the makeup of the Timetabling Team—and an additional appointment—reflecting the ongoing evolution of the Project.

Brian Cameron has taken over responsibility for Project Management from Rick Nelson, who is overseeing the Student Administration transition.

Interviews were held last month for the position of Timetabling Coordinator. An offer will be made to the successful candidate some time this week. The Coordinator will be responsible for taking timetabling out of 'project mode' and turning it into an ongoing business process, administered by a timetabling group in the Student Administration building.

Jason Keeping started with the team in early April. Jason is doing data entry and taking room bookings.

The Timetabling Team is also benefiting from the assistance of timetabling expert Sue Chapman, who is on secondment from Griffith University in Queensland. Sue coordinated the implementation of Syllabus Plus at Griffith in 1996, and so has plenty of suggestions for making sure our implementation runs smoothly. She's not afraid to get her hands dirty, either, and has been ringing around the faculties, chasing academics for the information needed to prepare the Semester 2 timetable. ☉

Meet your SIS-ers

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until the publication of the final timetable in May. Sue's insight has thus far proved invaluable in improving the quality of data that goes into the timetabling system, though you have to wonder what all these Brisbanites did wrong to be sent to freezing cold Armidale!



Brian Cameron



Sue Chapman

Sally Dunbar is actually a SITT-er, not a SIS-ter. She's helping the Student Information Transition Team update the textbook lists for deployment via the new online book list. Sally began work at UNE on 8 March; before that she was a recruitment coordinator for Armidale JobLink Plus. Since joining the team Sally has thrown herself heart and soul into the UNESIS social club, achieving record-breaking ticket sales for the Easter raffle.



Sally Dunbar



Megan Le Lievre

Megan Le Lievre temped with the SITT-ers for a couple of weeks, doing data cleanup for the Banner migration to Callista.

Jason Keeping has been working with the timetabling team, entering data into the system and taking room bookings. Jason is currently taking time off to fulfill a heroic mission in Newcastle—donating a kidney to his older sister. The UNESIS team wishes both of them a the best of luck and a speedy recovery.

Jonathan Burne is steadily working his way down in the world. He started out upstairs in the Applications Group, helping twisted SIS-ter Linda Wells to develop a web interface to the student database that

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Meet your SIS-ters

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would give students access to their assessment results online. His next stop was supposed to be the Helpdesk, located on the bottom floor of the ITD building. Linda grabbed him on the way down, and he's currently applying his knowledge of Banner and PL/SQL programming to the data migration project. Jonathan will remain with the SIS team until after implementation is completed.



Jason Keeping



Jonathan Burne

Brian Stevens has visited the SIS office quite a few times now, most recently to install the Callista student web interface, Callista Connect. Normally based in Geelong, Brian travels around Callista client universities as a roving consultant specialising in Connect installations.



Paul Vatta



Brian Stevens

Callista SIS-ter Paul Vatta provides technical consultation to Callista client universities, helping them to fast-track their implementations and avoid pitfalls other clients have encountered. He's been visiting us from Geelong to help with data migration and interfaces, and to provide advice about forms and reports. ☺

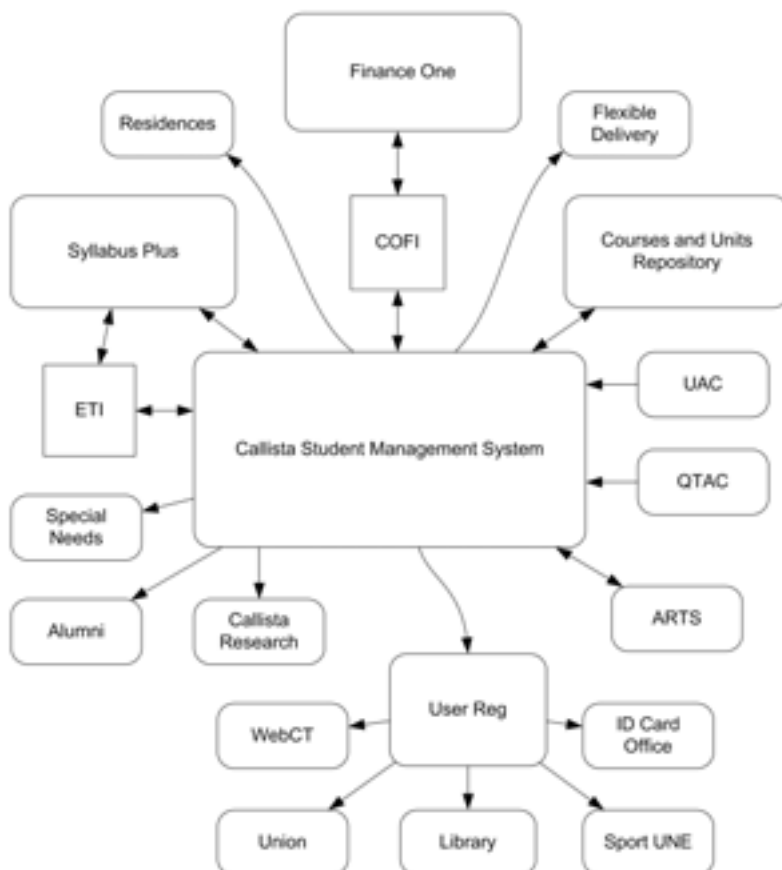
Interfacing Callista

The new student management system won't operate in a vacuum—there are many new and existing systems with which it must interface and share data. The diagram below shows the relationship between Callista and these other systems. Keep in mind that this is just a conceptualization—the live system may not work exactly in the way it is depicted here.

Aside from the big ones—the Syllabus Plus timetabling system and Finance One—there are a number of smaller, specialised systems that utilise data from Callista Student. Special Needs, Alumni, Residences, and Research will all derive student information via one-way feeds from Callista.

Data such as entrance scores and basis of admission will be extracted from external UAC and QTAC databases, and Callista will share information with ARTS (Automated Results Transfer System). User Reg (the bit at the bottom) feeds basic user information to areas such as Dixon Library and Safety and Security.

The two square boxes (COFI and ETI) are interfaces that Callista uses to 'talk' to external systems. COFI stands for Callista Open Finance Interface. ETI stands for Examination Timetabling Interface. ☺



Talk to us

There are a number of people participating in the UNESIS implementation project in one way or another. If you're particularly interested in helping implement your new SIS, but haven't yet been tapped on the shoulder, let us know you want to join in. Send an email to unesis@une.edu.au, use the 'Contact Us' link on www.une.edu.au/unesis/ or call **extension 3328**.