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News from the SIS-terhood

In September we introduced you to our new Quality Assurance Manager, Ross Dobson. Since then we've learned of another good reason to have Ross on the project team – he's just completed his *Diploma in Project Management* through UNE Partnerships. We had already recognised him as an asset to the team; now we know that he also brings 'conscious competence' in project management. His Diploma studies have given him a sound understanding of (and real respect for) what it takes to efficiently manage a project as large as the UNESIS implementation.



UNE Partnerships' Managing Director, Leonie Henschke awards Ross Dobson his Diploma in Project Management

More SIS-ers working on your system

Previous occupants of the project office have been amazed at just how many people we've been able to squeeze into our space behind the vending machines on the second floor of the ITD building. Delighted by the challenge, we've just made room for three new Analyst/ Programers who joined us in late October. Working on data migration with Rob Hale (*see page 2 of our May newsletter*) and Linda Wells (*you can spot her on page 3 of this issue*), our new SIS-ers are not only new to UNESIS, but they're also new to UNE and Armidale. So if

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What's a good flavour for a SIS?

You've heard before that we're implementing a "vanilla" system from Callista, but do you know what it means? It's really about containing costs, and using the system as it was designed, rather than spending heaps of money modifying it to suit our existing work practices.

Those who participated in the SIS Analysis Project last year will recall that both systems we looked at – from Callista and Technology One – offered some functions that fit our processes and some that didn't. Both vendors produced a "fit and gap analysis" to help us identify where the fits were between their systems and our processes, and probably more importantly, where the gaps were.

Actually, there were a lot more fits than gaps. Consistent with the 80/20 rule, almost 80% of Callista's functionality already matches our current business practices, so it's that last 20% that requires our focused attention. Because Callista's system was originally designed with input from 12 Australian universities, it provides the functions that all Aussie institutions need to administer student information. So the gaps we'll need to fill aren't in *what* we need to do, but in *how* we do it.

The implementation team will soon be in a position to start to address some of the gaps with staff from operational areas around the University. Once we have system modules in prototype form (*see page 4*), we can show you the functional modules and highlight where different work processes may be appropriate.

Together we can map out how to fill in the gaps as you get to see how your new SIS functions and consider how your current work processes might be modified. You won't have to start with a blank sheet of paper though; the UNESIS business analysts can contribute suggestions, since their intensive analysis has given them plenty of time to think about how to possibly fill the gaps.

What are the consequences of a non-vanilla system?

Considering what's happened as other universities have implemented customised systems, we could summarise the consequences as *massive cost overruns*. RMIT's implementation of a PeopleSoft SIS has cost that institution \$47 million – that's 3.7 times their original budget. (Don't let those numbers make your heart jump though – UNE's budget for implementing our SIS isn't even close to half of RMIT's original budget.)

Allan Morris, RMIT's executive director of IT, offers this sage advice: **"What you should always try to do is, rather than trying to modify the system to suit your processes, at all times try to look at ways of modifying your processes to suit the system."**

Other universities have also experienced cost blowouts in implementing their student systems. Observations of their experiences had already led Project Director, Peter Edwards, to set up a fixed-priced contract for UNE's Callista implementation. It was last year's SIS Analysis Project that allowed us to enter into such a contract, giving Callista staff a good understanding of what UNE's student information needs were before they had to sign on the dotted line. So we chose vanilla before we even opened the door to the shop, and feedback suggests that it was a good choice.

More SIS-ers working on your system

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you see them around, please say hi and welcome them to UNE:

Clive Skilton still has a bit of a South African sound about him, even though he's more Aussie now. Besides having spent seven years in PNG, he's put in a couple of years in Sydney and over twenty years in Brisbane. His work on our SIS will focus on issues very familiar to Clive, as he's just completed three years as a full time student at Griffith, earning a Bachelor of Internet Computing.



Clive Skilton



Gary Robertson

Gary Robertson is an Albury boy who moved to Armidale via Brisbane. QUT enticed him there for his computing studies and awarded him a Bachelor of Information Technology in '96. His seven years of programming since then have given him a solid background for tackling data migration from Banner and the now 71(!) satellite databases.

John McCrorey just returned a few months ago from 12 years in the UK, where he earned a Diploma in Software Engineering. In recent years he's worked in the digital photography industry, which sounds more glamorous than data migration (at least to those of us who don't get excited about bits and bytes of data). We're pleased to have John, Gary and Clive join us to work through all the legacy data we need to bring into UNESIS.



John McCrorey



Greg Chappell

Greg Chappell is an old hand with student systems, having participated in the Banner implementation in '93-'94 before moving into the Student Database Unit (SDU) in '95, where he's been since, as technical support for the Banner system.

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Getting Personal: the UNE Web Portal Project

One of the key deliverables of the UNESIS project is a student web portal – a single gateway to personalised information and business processes relevant to students of the University.

In September, a project planning team was formed to look at solutions for a student web portal as part of an overall UNE web portal to update our web presence and give it a unified look. The team will shortly begin making presentations to the University community; consulting with students, academics and administrators; developing a "proof of concept" prototype; and producing a working web portal for students, ready to launch alongside UNESIS in September 2004.

Important target audiences for an overall UNE web portal will include current and prospective staff, alumni, and the general public. Initially, though, the team is focusing on providing services to current students. As a gateway to existing resources, as well as resources under development, the web portal is envisaged as a one-stop-shop to allow students to self-manage information like their personal details and enrolment details, and check their timetables, exam results and progression toward course completion.

Students will be able to personalise what services appear on their homepage, as well as what it looks like. In fact, one of the defining features of a web portal is that it can be personalised to fit the needs of the user, rather than merely reflecting the historical structure of the institution it represents. This means, for instance, that Urban and Regional Planning students visiting the UNE web portal won't need to drill down through the University homepage, faculties, and schools to find information pertinent to their degree – it will be right there, on their personalised homepage.

The web portal will also provide other, non-university related, services that students might need or want, such as shopping, news, search engines, chat groups, and horoscopes. It is personalised services such as these that promote the growth of online communities and foster strong links between a university's web presence and its stakeholders.

The project planning team is made up of a core of knowledgeable, experienced UNE staff. Project Manager Steve Campbell heads the team. (*Meet Steve and the other UNESIS-ers working on the web project in the May issue of our Update.*) Julianne Paltridge, Assistant Registrar – Systems, is currently researching what information and services students are likely to want included in their portal. Webmaker Anne Abbott brings a wealth of experience in managing the University's websites. UNESIS team members Dan Dooner and Leon Braun are investigating technical and design issues relating to the portal, and UNESWeb Project Manager Daniel Gooch will be integrating the Student Web Portal Project with the overall UNESWeb Project – the planned revamp of UNE's entire web presence. Together, they are taking the first steps towards bringing UNE's web presence into the twenty-first century.

Smoothing the Transition

Although everybody is excited about launching the new, Callista-based UNESIS next year, it is just as important to keep the current Banner system running, and to ensure that the transition from Banner to UNESIS goes as smoothly as possible. That's where the **Student Information Transition Team** comes in. It's their job to provide essential support for core student information services while we transfer business operations from Banner to UNESIS, and to aid in the transition from the old system to the new.

The SITT members (or **SITT-ers**, as they prefer to be known) are Greg Chappell and Carolyn Kirk from the old Student Database Unit (SDU), Lorraine Roberts and Julie Ryan, working on the the 2004 Handbook, and Steve Gully on timetabling. Linda Wells is wearing two hats these days, having taken on the role of SITT Manager while she's also working on data migration with Rob Hale and our three new Analyst/Programmers (*see page 2*).



SITT members (from left to right): Lorraine Roberts, Linda Wells, Steve Gully, Carolyn Kirk & Julie Ryan (see Greg Chappell on page 2)

Our SITT-ers are not only responsible for ensuring that the transition from Banner to UNESIS goes smoothly, but also for testing the data and interfaces in the prototype version of Callista (*see page 4*), scheduled to roll out in February next year.

They'll maintain a close working relationship with the UNESIS team (in fact, they're located just around the corner from us on the second floor of the IT building, and we think of them as our own anyway). Reporting to Julianne Paltridge (Assistant Registrar – Systems), they are functionally part of Student Admin. Having been established as a BPI working group (*see our May Update for more about business process improvement projects*), the SITT will also work under the watchful eye of the BPI Steering Committee.

The team isn't permanent, but will remain in place until UNESIS goes live. Its busiest period will start early next year with the launch of the new system prototype, and will run through the September 2004 start of live use of the new system. ☉

Timetabling Update

The first phase of UNE's timetabling system implementation is now complete, after a big effort from staff in all the Schools and our timetabling project team.

On 23 September we published the draft timetable web pages for comment, then updated them to publish as the official timetable before re-enrolment of continuing internal students started on 22 October.

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More SIS-ers working on your system

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With the set-up of the new SITT (*see adjacent story*), Greg is now working as part of that team, still supporting Banner, while he will also help test the prototype of the Callista heart of UNESIS (*see page 4*).

Callista SIS-ers helping all the way

If you've been around the project office lately, you will have seen a swarm of other faces as well, some familiar and some new. They're all Callista people, mostly business analysts (*like our Buzz Rats – see page 1 of our July issue*) who bring a wealth of knowledge of Callista's system, as well as an understanding of how other universities have configured the system to suit their needs.

Rhett Davis might look so familiar that you could be forgiven for thinking of him as a permanent fixture at UNE. Last year he probably felt like he was, as he worked with us throughout the SIS Analysis Project to demonstrate Callista's system and create a "fit & gap analysis" (*see lead article on page 1 of this issue*). This year he's been given the opportunity to live at home (in Geelong, Vic) a lot more, visiting us occasionally to work with UNE's business analysts. We always enjoy getting to work with him, even though some of us can't remember that his name is *not* Rhett Butler!



Rhett Davis



Mike Estcourt

Mike Estcourt also joined us at various times during last year's analysis, focusing at the time on UNE's needs and how they might be met by Callista's future system developments. In his current role as General Manager – Customer Delivery Services, he's vitally interested in our implementation project. In fact, he now serves on the UNESIS Project Board (*refer to the 'Implementation Project Management Structure' on page 4 of our March Update*) as Callista's Project Director.

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Callista SIS-ers helping all the way *Continued from page 3*

Sharlene Abela will be familiar to system users who participated in analysing financial issues last year. Callista staff regard her as their financial whizz kid, so she's the ideal match for UNE SIS-ter Silvia Danieli (*introduced on page 3 of our September Update*), charged with making sure financial issues handled in UNESIS will work well with the University's financial system and processes. (The rest of us who aren't so financially inclined think of Sharlene more for her skills in knitting "muppet skin" scarves – she introduced us to the variegated "feathers" wool last year, before it came onto the market in Armidale.)



Sharlene Abela



Michael Fearn-Wannan

Michael Fearn-Wannan is our latest Callista recruit, having joined us in September to work with our Buzz Rats in developing a system prototype (*see adjacent story*). A truly flexible all-rounder, he's been an IT consultant for 27 years in roles ranging from programmer to business analyst, to project manager. With this broad background, Michael is proving to be a valued facilitator in bringing together the work of our business analysts and project managers. If you haven't seen Michael yet, keep an eye out in the early mornings for the guy walking into IT in his biking leathers. ☺

Talk to us

OK, you know the drill by now...

We want to hear from you. Good or bad, we'd like to know what you think about UNESIS, timetabling, you name it.

Use the 'Contact Us' link on www.une.edu.au/unesis/ or email us direct at unesis@pobox.une.edu.au.

And yes, the phone is still an option – call us on **extension 3328**.

Timetabling Update

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Deploying timetable information on the web for both staff and students is a significant result of phase 1 of the project. Staff can access teaching timetables via staff number validation, and students can select combinations of units to view as potential timetables.

The timetabling team has been able to accommodate most staff preferences while maintaining a guarantee of at least an hour for lunch between noon and 2pm for all staff and students, and at least one teaching-free day for all staff. Some staff have elected not to maintain these constraints.

For the recent re-enrolment process, students used PCs set up in the Lazenby Annexe to access timetabling on the web, and referred to print-outs of teaching timetables posted on noticeboards in Lazenby Hall. We're pleased to say that, despite initial concerns we were hearing, students were able to complete the re-enrolment process without any problems other than those that happen at every re-enrolment session.

The aims of phase 1 of the timetabling project were to move the UNE timetabling process from a decentralised, faculty-based activity to a centrally coordinated environment provided by the Syllabus Plus system, and to generate the class timetable for first semester '04. Phase 2 of the project aims to display teaching events for the April 2004 residential schools, and to produce an improved timetable for second semester.

The team is conducting a post-implementation review of phase 1, and would appreciate feedback from staff and students. Each School has questionnaires available, or you can send your feedback via email to timetabling@une.edu.au.

Prototyping the new student system

You've been waiting for a while now, as we've worked our way through the early stages of the project, and your memory of the Callista system has probably faded a bit since last year's vendor demonstrations. Well, finally you'll get to familiarise yourself again when the new system prototype goes on show in February.

UNESIS business analysts are busy configuring the prototype and setting up real UNE data so we can test the set-up before building the production system. As soon as we have something ready to show (and your current work processes slow down enough for you to take a mental break), we'll set up a demonstration for you. It sounds like February will work best for Student Admin, so that's what we're aiming for.

Prototyping is a new approach for Callista, driven by project manager Dave Naylor. We're delighted to get to use the approach, as we all think it will help us to iron out details earlier in the process of building our production system. What you'll see in February will be a "first cut" through some of the major system functions, to be able to provide you with an overview. We'll flesh it out with more detail over time, but think the first cut should give you a good idea of what to expect come September next year. ☺

