

**SPECIAL REPORT**  
of the  
**UNIVERSITY COMPUTER AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS  
COMMITTEE**  
concerning  
**THE STUDENT INFORMATION SERVICE (SIS)  
DATABASE IMPLEMENTATION**

Presented at the  
615<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate  
March 13, 2003

**COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

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Michael VanKleef**

The use of SIS by UMass teaching and support staff is fraught with problems. The problems threaten to disrupt the academic process. The University Computer and Electronic Communications Committee suggests changes in the responsibilities for assessing the problems.

The Committee recommends that the Faculty Senate adopt a motion expressing the goals recommended by the Committee which recognizes that:

- A. The need for efficient Student Information Services is fundamental to the academic enterprise, but:
1. SIS computer access is unbearably slow at critical times. Vital information on non-majors is not accessible in timely fashion by a Department evaluating many transfer requests. Information that once appeared on one student information screen now takes up to 20 minutes to view on multiple screens slow to display. Reports obtain that waste paper, are difficult to print, and are inappropriate in format.
  2. The Spire SIS user interface and, especially, the Mobius report utility are user unfriendly.
  3. People are having enormous problems getting the information and reports that had heretofore been readily available.
  4. Increased student empowerment in registering for courses early has left departments crippled in being able to distribute students evenly into course sections.
  5. Solutions to admitted problems are being postponed due to a limited life (3 semesters) of the current software which will change with PeopleSoft 8. Who needs to look ahead to see what PeopleSoft 8 solves? How long will we live with transition problems?
  6. OIT, a non-academic unit, is currently in charge of triage of SIS problems. OIT is not currently benefiting from substantial campus expertise on the consequences of SIS changes, particularly from the end-users' perspective in academic departments.
  7. Administrative units, such as the Bursar and Registrar, have had a defined pipeline to communicate their pressing needs to the 20 SIS OIT programmers. However, Academic Affairs staff and faculty have myriad problems that do not have a forum other than the OIT Help Desk in which their particular problems are triaged.
- B. An Academic Liaison Group needs to be formed and take charge of dealing with SIS implementation problems, providing a forum for users and experts at various action levels to communicate in various formats for the solution of problems:
1. A high Level I function and planning group responsible to the Provost would meet as needed to discuss priorities and future needs identified by the action groups that are defined below. This level needs to include experts and end-users able to communicate what problems exist and administrators able to recognize when particular solutions need a higher priority. While current high-level oversight exists, the past emphasis of this highest-level group has not included the current problems being experienced by Academic end-users. It is recommended that a knowledgeable representative from an Academic Department familiar with teaching and scheduling needs be included at this highest level.

2. **A Level II of administrative and staff middle-management experts, decision makers and stakeholders (OIT and Academic Department end-users) would meet regularly to share expertise, discuss current problems and triage practical immediate solutions. Fundamental current impasses would be identified and transmitted to the highest level. Presence of knowledgeable users may allow already-available solutions to be shared widely without demands on scarce OIT programmer time.**
3. **A Level III weekly drop-in session staffed with knowledgeable Academic Liaison Group (Level II) members would provide immediate help to end-users with routine problems. Immediate solutions can be shared and impasses identified and passed on to Level II for consideration.**

**C. Significant agreement already exists on forming an Academic Liaison Group.**

1. **The Provost has offered a representative to represent her office in forming the Group (Professor Richard Rogers).**
2. **Administrative Systems Director, Jackie Watrous, has offered to share her experience with setting up the HR/Financials Liaison group.**
3. **The Associate Chancellor for Information Technologies and Planning, Rosio Alvarez, has voiced her willingness and enthusiasm for more cooperation with an Academic Liaison Group.**
4. **The Rules Committee of the Faculty Senate has asked for a solution.**
5. **Academic Department personnel, staff and faculty would like more input into identifying problems and directing the solutions.**

**MOVED:  
17-03**

**That the Faculty Senate approve an Academic Liaison Group to be formed under the direction of the Provost, bringing academic, administrative, managerial and end-user expertise to bear on SIS problems. The Group's responsibilities are to identify the most important current and future SIS problems and to bring together the appropriate people to create appropriate solutions. Membership should include academic advisors (end-users) from several schools and colleges and at least one representative from the University Computer and Electronic Communications Committee. The Academic Liaison Group should report regularly to the University Computer and Electronic Communications Committee and once per semester to the full Faculty Senate.**