

Special Report
of the
University Computing and Electronic Communications Committee
on
Improving the Student Information System

March 22, 2005

The implementation of the student information system has had many complex effects on campus operations. While the Ad Hoc Committee on the Student Information System investigates the design and implementation of the entire system, one issue has emerged as a primary obstacle in the use of the current system.

Many people, especially in advising, have discussed how it has increased the amount of time required to consult student records to make decisions. In particular, the requirement that to find the 6 pieces of information needed about a group of students might require 10 clicks for each student, each click sometimes requiring a lengthy wait. Variations on this issue show up over and over again in users complaints about the system.

Users should be able to create, save, conduct, and share their own queries against the student information system. These queries should be able to perform a search using a list of criteria, e.g. a list of student numbers, and return the desired data in tabular format with clearly labeled headings, ideally in a variety of available formats (including Portable Document Format (PDF) and Comma Separated Values (CSV).

By enabling users to create and repeat their own queries, they will be able to tailor the returned information to exactly what is needed to make decisions. Being able to save and share queries will allow departments to improve everyone's efficiency by creating common student document formats that can be printed out ahead of time when students come to advising sessions, that list all of the needed pieces of information. By allowing a search to be conducted against a list of students, a huge increase in efficiency can be achieved. By providing the data in a variety of formats, in particular in formats that facilitate attractive printing (PDF) and repurposing of data (CSV), the data will be much more useful to the end user.