An Update on The University of Mississippi’s Campus Management Project

Data Migration Critical in CM Implementation

Spend a few minutes with the Information Technology (IT) staff working on the data migration involved in implementing Campus Management, and you’ll find a group quick to joke, tease, and laugh.

“We have to kid around and keep things light,” says Kay Card, “or else we’d all just walk around being stressed out all day long.”

The ring leader of the group is Brenda Wimberly, who came out of retirement from the University to work part-time on the project.

“It helps that I was involved in writing some of the original programs in legacy when it was first developed in 1979,” she notes, adding “back when I was two years old.”

Legacy is the term used for the current student information system, or SIS, which consists of a variety of programs developed in-house by IT staff. The system has been modified, updated, and maintained over the years, but the data it contains must first be moved to an Oracle database before it can migrate into the Campus Management system.

“The reason we’re going from legacy to Oracle,” explains Tim McCready, “is because the information does not map directly into CM. For instance, in legacy ‘male’ and ‘female’ are represented by M and F, but in CM they are 1 and 2.”

McCready says some information is converted while still in legacy, but other data gets changed once it is in Oracle. In order to maintain integrity, the data must be converted in a specific sequence, since some records are dependent on others already being entered into the system. The team is using a map and guidelines developed by SAP to stay on track.

The amount of data involved is daunting, since it includes all students enrolled at the University during the past five years as well as all prospective students.

“We are looking at 88,000 students right now,” says Ross Hankins, “and all the information that goes along with them, including academic records, bursar’s accounts, and the like. Over half of them are future students, so a lot of them won’t enroll eventually, but we still need to carry them into the new system since they are prospects.”

He notes that it’s not just the four of them, or even just other IT staff, who are involved in data migration for this project, but rather a large number of people across campus.

“It’s very, very time consuming, and it’s very tedious because you have to check and double check to make sure that everything converts correctly,” explains Wimberly. “It may seem simple, but it’s not. In my opinion, data migration is the most important part of a successful system development.”

Undergraduate Admissions Staff Anticipates Transition to CM

In the world of undergraduate admissions, the pressure is on to be faster and more efficient in processing applications and responding to prospective students.

“Students today are applying to as many as 8 to 10 schools,” says Cathey Morrison, UM Assistant Director of Admissions Operations. “The faster our turn-around time, the better chance we’ll have of applicants actually enrolling. We want to be the first or second school they hear from, not the tenth when they’ve already made up their minds.”

Morrison and the staff of the Undergraduate Admissions Office, the new Campus Management software promises to help them meet this goal.

“In our peak time right now, it can take us anywhere from two to four weeks, once we have all their documents, to get back to students as to whether they are accepted or not,” she explains. “CM will help us...”
Data Center Prepares for CM with Holiday Upgrades

Suzanne LeBlanc, Suzette Baumbaugh, and John Worley (l to r) were among those who remained on the job at the University of Mississippi’s Data Center over the long holiday break enjoyed by most UM faculty and staff at home.

The Data Center houses all centralized computer services for the campus, including e-mail, web services, administrative processes, and academic programs like Blackboard. All the servers that will be used to run the Campus Management software are located in the facility.

According to Robin Miller, Director of Technical Services, the five upgrades which took place over the holidays were necessary for CM to go live this spring.

“Because this is an addition to what we are already running, it will take more resources,” he states, “and the holidays are the most opportune time for doing upgrades, because during them the system is not available. When everyone else is off, that’s when our people shine.”

Because network management will play an important role in how quickly a user will be able to access information on CM, several upgrades on the network around campus and at the Data Center have also been done over the past 18 months.

The Data Center is a secure building with an around the clock operations staff that monitors and maintains all the machines on site. According to Miller, the Center has a very sophisticated back-up system involving a private network which no one else can access and where data is constantly being stored for safekeeping.

“As a CM user, you shouldn’t have to worry about where the information is stored and how it’s being protected,” he asserts. “That should just be a given, and that’s our job.”

Undergraduate Admissions continued

evaluate transcripts, calculate GPAs, and do other things more efficiently so we can respond to students more promptly.”

Larry Ridgeway, Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Life and leader of the CM Core Team charged with developing and implementing the undergraduate admissions component, concurs.

“We anticipate that CM will further streamline the admissions process,” he notes, “and it will also offer students the ability to track the status of their applications online.”

For the fall semester of 2002, the Admissions Office received almost 10,000 applications. Out of that number, 6,900 were admitted to the University, and about one-third of those enrolled.

“It’s a lot of work for the no-shows,” Morrison comments, “but we have to treat each application as if the student is serious about coming here. A good experience could influence their decision.”

Even with the anticipated benefits of CM, Morrison says there is some trepidation among admissions staff about changing to a new system.

“We have a seasoned staff that is used to doing things the old way,” she explains.

“They don’t know anything about SAP, and the configuration of the screens and the terminology used are all different. They’re going to have to learn a new language as well as how to maneuver in a new system, but they are willing to do it because they know we’ve had good representation in the planning and development of the system.”

Admissions Specialist Shelia Howard-Baker is enthusiastic about the approaching transition.

“I believe CM will be a definite ‘plus’ for our office,” she says, “and I look forward to the challenge of full implementation!”

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