Further Background on SIS+

SIS+ Modifications and Relationship with SCT (SIS+ Vendor).

Due to the modifications performed on SIS+ by Computing and Communications (C&C) and the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs (VCSA) office, UCR no longer contracts with the SIS+ vendor (SCT) for maintenance. This lack of maintenance has two consequences:

1. **All updates, changes, and maintenance of the system are performed by C&C programmers.** For example, this maintenance includes annual updating of financial aid eligibility data provided by the federal government. As the campus has grown, the lack of vendor supplied functionality/updates has made it increasingly difficult for the programming staff to provide BOTH production support as well as new product development.

2. **The technical infrastructure that supports the core SIS+ system has not changed during the past 10 years.** Therefore, users of SIS+ access the system with non-graphical interfaces (commonly called IBM 3270 screens) and SIS information is stored in a non-relational database. Please note that students have web access to a significant amount of SIS+ functionality via the Edify infrastructure (discussed below).

Web Access to SIS and Edify Infrastructure.

Approximately five years ago, UCR deployed student self-service web access to key SIS+ functionality. This web access is enabled via a vendor supplied system known as Edify. The Edify system allowed UCR to provide significant web access to students years before other universities provided similar capabilities. However, the Edify system is very proprietary and the only method of providing additional capacity is by contracting with the vendor for additional infrastructure. **UCR ran out of Edify capacity approximately two years ago.** In response to students’ dissatisfaction with web access to registration, grades, etc., C&C and the VCSA began to “remove” web services from Edify and made them available via a secondary, non-Edify methodology. In general, the goal has been to provide web access via Edify when an update to SIS+ is required, while providing “view only” web services via the secondary service. Thus, students register via PAWS (Edify enabled) and view grades through GROWL (the aforementioned non-Edify web platform).

Importantly, despite the efforts to limit student web access via PAWS / Edify, the strain on the Edify infrastructure is tremendous during peak periods. Due to the non-open, proprietary nature of the Edify system, upgrading PAWS is expensive. Tripling the existing capacity (from 75 simultaneous connections to 225 connections) will cost approximately $375,000.
Edify Web Access – Comparisons to myUCLA and myUCDAVIS.

Although the PAWS / Edify system has served the campus and its students well, it must be noted that it is NOT a portal (akin to a myUCLA or a myUCDAVIS). Indeed, the recent introduction of GROWL has made UCR’s web offerings LESS portal like, since separate user sessions must be established to access PAWS and GROWL (in other words, two log-ins are required if a student wishes to register and view grades).

A portal will allow students “single sign-on” access to registration, grades, financial aid information, as well as web mail, campus news, Blackboard, etc.

SIS+ Data Storage and Access – Notes on Data Warehouse.

As pointed out earlier in this document, during the last 10 years, there has not been any significant change to the core technology supporting SIS+ at UCR. For example, data in SIS+ is not maintained in a relational database and the campus does not currently have a student information system data warehouse.

Access to SIS+ data is almost exclusively accomplished via a data extraction program knows as FOCUS. While not a programming language, FOCUS is nevertheless not a tool for non-technical users. The reliance on FOCUS (especially during the past several years of campus growth) has negatively impacted both central offices and departments, as they attempt to recruit, plan for, manage, and advise new and existing students.