Appendix F

UCLA’s “Make Versus Buy” Decision.

Introduction and Background

In the late 1990s, the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) faced many of the same SIS challenges and issues currently facing UCR. Ultimately, in order to meet these challenges, UCLA decided not to purchase a vendor supplied system but rather committed itself to continuing the development and customization of the existing campus system. This development included the student portal known as myUCLA.

The SIS technical environment at UCLA is almost identical to UCR’s. The following notes identify several of the similarities between both campuses:

1. UCLA and UCR both use the Information Associates SIS+ product as their core student system “engines”. Neither campus receives support from the SIS+ vendor, SCT, and each campus has invested heavily in SIS+ customizations during the past ten years.

2. UCLA and UCR both run their student system on an IBM mainframe. All non-student access to the system is via “green screens” (IBM 3270 screens).

3. UCR and UCLA both have significant portions of their SIS+ data stored in VSAM (a non-relational database file storage system). UCR has 100% of its data stored in VSAM and UCLA has approximately 50% of its data stored in VSAM.

Given the technical similarities between the two campuses, UCR approached UCLA and queried campus information technology staff concerning their decision to “make” rather than “buy” an upgrade to UCLA’s student information system.

UCLA Information Technology Staff

UCR was able to conduct two interviews with the following UCLA information technology staff:

Don Worth
Director, Administrative Information Systems
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Bonnie Allen
Manager, Student Applications, Administrative Information Systems
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These interviews focused on the decision not to purchase a vendor supplied student system, staffing and financial support for UCLA’s “make” decision, UCLA’s technical environment, and the current level of user satisfaction with UCLA’s customized SIS+

**UCLA’s decision NOT to Purchase a Vendor System – “The Why”**

UCLA offered three primary reasons why it chose (in 1998 and 1999) to continue developing and customizing its student system (and therefore to not purchase a vendor supplied system):

1. UCLA has a very strong desire to “remain in control of its own destiny” relating to its student information system.

2. UCLA feels it has a large enough and skilled enough permanent programming staff to meet campus student system requirements.

3. UCLA believed that the campus would have found the “mandatory changes” associated with a vendor supplied student system simply too controversial and thus too difficult to implement.

**UCLA’s Technical / Production Environment**

UCLA currently supports two web systems that access SIS+ data. Both systems utilize “middle ware” developed using Microsoft’s Visual Basic and COM infrastructure. This “middle ware” allows web pages to call SIS+ functionality to provide “read only” information and to allow web based transaction processing as well. This “middle ware” replaced UCLA’s Edify infrastructure (proprietary web enabling system in use at UCR) several years ago.

Read only access to SIS+ data (course enrollment information) is enabled in UCLA’s portal (known as myUCLA). The myUCLA portal was developed by UCLA College of Letters and Science. Transaction processing is enabled via UCLA’s on-line URSA (University Records System Access) system. This system was developed by UCLA’s Administrative Information Systems group.

UCLA offers students “single sign-on” within the myUCLA portal environment (in other words, once students have logged into myUCLA, they can access URSA as well as all other portal services without subsequent log-ins).

UCLA currently does not offer the campus access to SIS+ data via a data warehouse.

**UCLA’s Current Initiatives.**

The two driving forces behind UCLA’s current initiatives are increasing student self-service access via the web and increasing campus self-service access to student information system data. UCLA has already achieved much progress in terms of providing students web access to SIS+.
data and functionality. Therefore, the campus is focusing primarily on improving campus access to SIS information. UCLA is pursing the following two projects relating to data access:

1. **Conversion of VSAM data to a relational database (DB2).** UCLA has provided $8.2 million dollars to convert its VSAM data to DB2 (IBM’s relational database). The funding highlights are as follows: $1.75 million for project management, database design, etc.; $3.8 million for base system conversion (program re-writes); $1 million to develop scripts to migrate the data; and $600,000 to convert reports.

   This project began in 2001 and it expected to be completed by 2006.

2. **Development of a SIS Data Warehouse.** UCLA has allocated $1.4 million for construction and population of a data warehouse. This project is not yet underway.

   This nearly $10 million dollars will be used almost exclusively for contract programmers and consulting services.

**UCLA’s Current SIS Technical Staffing.**

UCLA allocates its technical staff into four broad categories: Production staff; Development staff; Distributed Computing staff (supporting web and middle ware initiatives); and Management and Database staff. Details concerning staffing are as follows (please note, this is “central office” staff only):

- Production Staff, 18 FTE (includes a technical project manager in each group):
  - Admissions, 4 FTE
  - Financial Aid, 6 FTE
  - Student Records, 5 FTE
  - Student Business Services, 3 FTE

- Development Staff, 5 FTE

- Distributed Computing Staff (web / middle ware programmers), 4 FTE

- Management and database support, 2 FTE

**UCLA’s Comments Concerning SIS Functionality**

In general, UCLA’s IT staff believes that the campus is generally satisfied with the overall functionality delivered by SIS+ at UCLA. The campus has deployed a “non-weighted” class weight list capability and a student advising module has been developed by the College of Letters and Science. The campus is anxiously awaiting the development of the data warehouse.