Background.

In 1992, UCR implemented a commercially supplied student information system, Information Associates’ IA+, also known as SIS+. SIS+ was technically sophisticated for its time and allowed UCR to respond to the needs of a rapidly growing campus.

Over the years, UCR gradually modified the core SIS+ system. These modifications have resulted in a system that in many ways is very feature rich. Moreover, the campus has been able to deploy significant functionality to the web, providing students self-service Internet access to registration, grades, billing information, and more.

Nevertheless, campus growth has accelerated during the past several years, and SIS+ has started to show its age. As campus users (students, faculty, and administrators) have become more numerous and their demands more sophisticated, they have also expanded their definitions of the types of information they require. The definition of acceptable “wait times” to obtain information has changed as well, becoming ever shorter. In order to utilize resources most effectively, users need and want to obtain data directly; they cannot rely on central campus offices to relay information to them. At a projected student population of 25,000, the need to provide for SIS “self service” at all levels (students, faculty, and administrators) is absolutely essential.

In August 2001, Computing and Communications (C&C) was able to upgrade the campus IBM mainframe (providing a six fold increase in processing power as well as modernizing disk and other systems). The more powerful mainframe allowed UCR to make web access for students (known as PAWS) available for unprecedented numbers of hours while meeting all batch processing and printing requirements. Moreover, UCR’s Executive Vice Chancellor (EVC) recently provided much needed funding to further improve students’ SIS web access and to address key programming backlogs.

Despite the very positive efforts of the VCSA, C&C, and the support of the EVC, the activities to date should only be seen as short term actions that are paving the way for longer term solutions. *The challenges facing the campus student system infrastructure are very real.* Failure to act now could result in significant future problems, including process failures with the potential for detrimental impacts on UCR’s competitive position. These challenges will become evident in three primary areas: student web access to SIS, campus access to SIS data, and the ability to provide important new areas of functionality (e.g. a student advising module) required by campus growth.