Notes on Return on SIS Investment.

Given UCR’s highly decentralized environment, it is often very difficult to calculate the precise value of benefits or cost reductions associated with deploying or upgrading large, centralized corporate systems. Cost avoidance/reductions and other benefits often occur at the departmental or unit level and savings are therefore typically not “returned” to a central unit to offset expenditures associated with upgrading the system. Nevertheless, a SIS upgrade will result in very real benefits and cost avoidance/savings for the campus. Examples are as follows:

1. **Improved student service via avoidance of web “down time”**. During the past 18 months, the PAWS / Edify infrastructure has been “unavailable” twice during peak processing periods (Spring ’01 an Winter ’03). Moreover, although the impact is not as dramatic as during peak periods, the campus regularly experiences Edify interruptions during non-peak periods as well. Student demand for on-line access to registration and other functionality continues to simply overwhelm the system. A primary benefit resulting from a SIS upgrade will be robust on-line student web access.

2. **Improved student service via increased overall availability/access to SIS**. Each quarter, pressure increases to reduce SIS availability to accommodate system processes. Recently (January 2003) access was shortened on Wednesday evenings to allow for system maintenance. A system upgrade (including a data warehouse) will allow overall system access to be increased.

3. **Improved planning (and thus cost avoidance) via improved decision support for all campus constituencies**. An on-line, “point and click” SIS data warehouse will provide greatly improved “decision support” functionality. Currently, departments and colleges can’t accurately assess unmet demand for impacted classes, nor can they fully forecast future demand. Thus, in many departments, course planning is done on a “best guess” basis. The lack of useful statistics impacts all areas of course planning, such as hiring of faculty, scheduling of rooms, and ordering of textbooks. Importantly, the SIS data warehouse will also greatly improve the fiscal analysis associated with fees collected by the student information system (the current link between SIS+ and the campus general ledger is very weak and makes planning and analysis extraordinarily cumbersome).

4. **Improved student service and cost avoidance via better student advising**. An upgraded campus SIS will include web enabled advising functionalities and a “point and click” data warehouse. These capabilities will enhance student advising and could result in reduced “student time to graduate” and increased undergraduate retention.

5. **Cost avoidance and improved service due to automated processes and more rapid deployment of new SIS functionality**. There are many areas where the deployment of new SIS functionality could have a very positive impact on campus effectiveness, productivity, and ability to provide robust student services. A partial list of these areas includes the following: a class wait list capability, improved articulation management,
improved interface between SIS and Blackboard (e.g. a single location for grade input), and a robust interface between SIS and the VCSA’s optical imaging system.

6. Cost avoidance and improved service due to increased web enabled self service. An upgraded SIS will allow increasing amounts of SIS functionality to be web enabled (e.g. an on-line financial aid award processing). These types of improvements are not only welcomed by students but also result in cost avoidance (for example, a reduction in the level of non-electronic “snail mail”) in departmental and unit offices.

7. Improved student satisfaction and improved campus competitive position via a student portal. UCR’s two on-line SIS interfaces (PAWS and GROWL) provide access to a broad range of student self service functionality. However, neither product is a portal (similar to a myUCLA or myUCDavis). Portals provide “single sign-on” to a web environment with access to the campus learning management system (Blackboard), web mail, campus calendar, web enabled SIS functionality, and customized web links unique to each student’s likes and dislikes. Failure to deploy such a portal not only directly (and negatively) impacts student service and satisfaction, but it also places UCR at a competitive disadvantage versus other UC campuses.