Client - Serve Yourself

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Information Technology at California State University, Fullerton is responsible for campus administrative mainframe and programming support, as well as for all mainframe applications such as the student records and financial accounting systems. Two campus organizations, University Extended Education and the Office of Analytical Studies rely heavily on the timeliness and accuracy of administration and student record data. These organizations have identified process improvements that are best met by client/server database applications. Due to limitations in the university’s Office of Information Technology support capabilities (budgetary and legacy system related), both University Extended Education and Analytical Studies have opted for internal database development while still relying on the Office of Information Technology’s mainframe data. This approach has resulted in increased local capabilities without the uncertainties related to working within an overloaded campus-wide Information Technology organization. Whether this approach is advantageous from an enterprise perspective remains to be seen.

BACKGROUND

California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) is one of 23 universities in the California State University System. Located approximately 30 miles southeast of Los Angeles (and about 8 miles north of Disneyland), CSUF provides instruction in a wide array of full- and part-time undergraduate and graduate degree programs to over 24,000 students. There are four Vice Presidents, a Chief Financial Officer, and a Chief Information Technology Officer who report directly to the President.
The Office of Information Technology (OIT) has four main divisions: Administrative Computing (AC); Campus Help Desk; Data Network; and Telephone Services. Administrative Computing is responsible for campus administrative mainframe and programming support as well as for all mainframe applications such as the student records and financial accounting systems. AC currently has nine staff members who are responsible for all administrative computing tasks. The staff includes a database administrator, four application programmers, and four system programmers.

**OIT Business Process Redesign Activities**

Over the past few years OIT has supported the President in a series of major initiatives that include:

1) New desktop computers for all full-time faculty and staff
2) Email accounts for all students, faculty and staff
3) Campus Help Desk for students, faculty and staff support
4) Remote computer access for all students, faculty and staff
5) Expansion of main campus student computer laboratories

From an information systems theory standpoint, these initiatives fall under the category of business process redesign (BPR), since BPR consists of “radically transforming organizational processes through the optimal use of information technology to achieve major improvements in quality, performance, and productivity.” (Raymond, et. al., 1998.) BPR is innovative. Participation tends to be top-down, with a broad, cross-functional scope. (Davenport, 1993.) These characteristics are consistent with the implementation activities at CSUF where the OIT successfully worked with the university community to implement these major campus-wide initiatives. In fact, the degree of innovation of some of these initiatives can be seen through the fact that within the CSU System, CSUF was the first campus i) to have a state-of-the-art computer and telephone network; ii) to place networked Windows NT Pentium II computers with Microsoft Office/Outlook on the desktop of all faculty, staff and administrators (in Spring 1998); iii) where every student is now given a permanent e-mail address while enrolled at CSUF; iv) where Web-based registration will take place (scheduled for a Spring 1999 implementation); and v) where most correspondence with students will eventually be accomplished via e-mail.

These initiatives were successful for a variety of reasons. First, the President spear-headed these
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