Banner -- The New Student Information System

By Erick Keating, Project Manager

Eastern Washington University has embarked on a 20-month collaborative project with SunGard SCT to implement a new Student Information System called Banner. Student components to be implemented will support recruitment, admission, registration, advising, financial aid and student loans. While this implementation is underway, planning will begin for the additional Banner capabilities to include human resources, finance and payroll system components. All of this work is being done under the project name of “TALONS.”

What is TALONS?

TALONS is an acronym chosen to indicate our implementation commitment to Teaching, Analyzing, Learning, Optimizing, Networking and Serving.

Teaching and Learning is at the heart of what we do at Eastern Washington University. We will be thoroughly engaged in teaching and learning as we implement the capabilities of Banner. Ultimately, the benefits of deploying a state-of-the-art system will be to improve our support for the delivery of education.

Analyzing is an important dimension of our implementation as we examine the processes and procedures used in the operation of our institution. Implementing a new system affords us the opportunity to examine business processes in our administration, identify alternatives, and adopt the most effective practices for EWU.

Optimizing is a recurring theme throughout the project from tuning the hardware and software for the absolute best performance, to streamlining business practices by taking advantage of the efficiencies and capabilities the Banner system provides.

Networking is another important concept not only in terms of linking and integrating our computer systems, but also in regards to expanding and enriching our personal connections among a wide range of work groups throughout our community, as well as with our peer institutions and SunGard SCT.

Serving brings us full circle back to teaching and learning. Banner provides a state-of-the-art tool to help our talented and dedicated staff be more efficient and effective in performing their duties. It will enable our students and faculty to conduct business with the university electronically at any time, not just when offices are staffed. Banner will allow us to enhance the service we provide not only to the Cheney campus students, staff and faculty, but also to the entire EWU community statewide.

What is Banner?

Banner is . . .

- an integrated suite of administrative software applications built specifically for higher educational institutions;
- the market leading solution in use at more that 800 institutions around the world;
- the flagship product of SunGard SCT which also provides our current system “PLUS 2000.”

Banner also is . . .

- built upon the market-leading Oracle relational database, making full use of the powerful tools and capabilities that Oracle provides;
- built upon a standards-based development methodology incorporating best practices of both higher education and the information technology industry;
- based on industry-standard tools and methods that ensure the security of our information while providing a wide range of choices on how we access and make use of our information;
- flexible in providing the connection and integration with non-SunGard SCT systems such as Blackboard;
- delivered with internet-native self-service components allowing students and faculty to use a web browser to interact directly with system modules designed to support their specific needs.

For more information see the TALONS project home page at www.ewu.edu/talons and SunGard SCT’s web site at www.sungardsct.com.

TALONS Project Communications

What is available now and what can we look for in the future?

A communications plan has been developed to keep faculty and staff apprised of project activities such as informational sessions, training and important project milestones. We will be using a wide variety of communication tools in an effort to reach the EWU community in a usable and friendly manner. Key activities within the communications plan are as follows:

Available Now

- TALONS Project web page – www.ewu.edu/talons
  Open to everyone, this site includes general project information such as scheduled activities, timelines, contacts, and links to additional information.
- TALONS e-mail address: talons@mail.ewu.edu. Please use this address to ask any questions you may have about the project.
- Periodic articles with links for additional information will appear in the Good Morning Eastern.

- TALONS Blackboard Course. This course is used as an intranet site with limited access for EWU and SunGard SCT employees. The purpose is to provide a secure workspace for our project teams – an electronic project notebook – where we can also safely keep and share proprietary and confidential SunGard SCT materials.

Throughout the project you will see articles and announcements in various EWU publications, including Now & Next, as well as individually distributed flyers. All EWU employees are welcome to request enrollment in this course.

**Coming in March:**

- TALONS News – This is an email list you can choose to subscribe to and receive periodic project news and announcements via email.

- Town Hall Meetings – open forum gatherings to share information about the project and promote two-way communications.

**TALONS’ Major Milestones and Accomplishments to Date**

**Listed below is a brief recap of the major project milestones and accomplishments to date:**

**October 2004**
- Contract signed and project officially begun
- Project planning and scheduling begun
- Project advisory committee formed and meetings begun

**November 2004**
- New system installed and operational for training on campus
- Business Process Analysis training conducted
- Formal project kickoff
- Student component and database administrator training begun

**December 2004 (ongoing)**
- Student component training and database administration training continued
- Project planning and scheduling continued
- Formal project definition document and communications plans drafted
- Data validation tables for student records, course catalog, and admissions drafted

**Upcoming Milestones**

**Winter 2005**
- Campus Loan Manager implementation begins
- Student training/consulting and Database Management training continues
- Technical training begins

**Spring 2005**
- Financial Aid module implementation begins
- Data migration training and implementation begins

**Summer 2005**
- Campus Loan Manager module live with current system
- Luminis module (university portal) implementation begins
- Admissions services go live

**Fall 2005**
- Workflow module installation and training begins
- Operational Data Store (datamart) installation and training begins
- Scholarship component of Financial Aid goes live

**Winter 2006**
- Financial Aid goes live
- Luminis goes live

**Spring 2006**
- Registration goes live
- Campus Loan Manager goes live with Banner system

**Summer 2006**
- Workflow module goes live
- Operational Data Store goes live

**Fall 2006**
- All Student and Financial Aid modules live
- Student and Financial Aid completed

**Business Process Analysis (BPA)**

As mentioned earlier, analysis is an important dimension of our implementation as we examine the processes and procedures used in the operation of our university. Business Process Analysis is a methodology which provides a structure for conducting this analysis. As the saying goes, we don’t want to “pave the cow paths.” Instead, we want to take advantage of this opportunity to simplify and improve processes as we move from the old to the new system.

Over the course of the implementation, SunGard SCT’s professional services consultants and EWU staff members will be performing business process analyses. In November, a group of EWU staff members took part in training to learn SunGard SCT’s technique for conducting business process analysis. By bringing this skill set in-house, we greatly increase our capacity for continuing to examine our processes on an ongoing basis. The benefits of using BPA during our implementation include:

- Addressing EWU’s goal to thoroughly examine and improve the processes we use to provide services while making optimal use of the capabilities and functions that Banner provides;
- Clearly documenting current processes in an “as is” state using a standard, shared methodology;
- Aiding decision making for numerous choices available in the Banner set-up;
- Aiding clarification of issues about how a particular process should work;
- Providing documentation of choices made and processes designed during Banner implementation;
- Providing benchmarks of current processes which can be used to assess implementation project achievements;
- Identifying and documenting processes that are candidates for support by the workflow module;
- Conducting the post implementation assessment of the configuration and deployment of Banner capabilities.

Please check the TALONS web page and watch for future announcements.

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