System-Wide Student Information Systems

In this report, The Hanover Research Council details three state university systems that employ system-wide online information systems to support student services, particularly those that include services such as application, enrollment, and registration. The student information systems profiled include those at the University of Hawaii, the University of Alaska, and the University of Maine Systems. Additional information is included on the University of Wisconsin System’s technology council, the Common Systems Review Group.
Introduction

In this report, we review online student application and registration systems employed by college and university systems across the U.S. The following three systems are in line with the interests of the requesting member, particularly in the areas of system-wide access and multiple institution registration capabilities:

- University of Hawaii System’s MyUH Information and Services Portal
- University of Alaska System’s MyUA
- University of Maine System’s MaineStreet

Additionally, while the University of Wisconsin System does not have a system-wide student information system that provides services across the state’s institutions, the use of a Common Systems Review Group may be informative to the coordination and organization efforts regarding across-campus access and registration capabilities. Consequently, relevant details of the Common Systems Review Group are also reviewed in this report.

A review of the three state university systems with system-wide student information systems reveals that two of the three systems – the University of Hawaii System and the University of Alaska System – use Sungard Higher Education software, while the University of Maine System uses PeopleSoft software. Although it does not yet have a system-wide online system, the University of Wisconsin System also currently uses a PeopleSoft-based student information system. While there was a slight variation in the software provider used, the functionalities of the systems for both students and faculty were remarkably similar across university systems.

Generally, for instance, the systems’ capabilities for students include:

- E-mail accounts;
- Course registration (with add/drop/swap capabilities);
- Tuition payment and financial aid management options;
- Textbook purchases;
- Transcript access;
- Personal information management; and
- Admissions applications and management.

Interestingly, the University of Alaska System also places emphasis on the ability of its MyUA system to “create, manage, and join group home pages for clubs, affiliations, and interests,” to allow students to share files and photos, and to manage personal and academic calendars. Students are also able to link to Blackboard courses through a “single-sign-on channel.”

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1 “MyUA Login.” University of Alaska. http://myua.alaska.edu/cp/home/loginf
Other common functionalities of these systems allow faculty members to:

- Check class lists;
- Override class registration;
- Enter final grades;
- View past class rosters;
- Publish course information; and
- Access student information.

The University of Alaska System’s online system also notifies faculty members if a student doesn’t order the required textbooks for a course and provides weekly updated user statistics, while the University of Maine system features access to admissions and recruitment details for faculty.

The following sections of this report will review these integrated online student information systems in greater detail.
University of Hawaii System’s MyUH Information and Services Portal

Site address: http://myuh.hawaii.edu

Institutions in the system: Three universities and seven community colleges

Approximate number of students: 54,500 total; 47,600 undergraduates

Information regarding the computer system: “MyUH is University of Hawaii’s first ever integrated student information system. Features include a common interface for all students, 100% web based services, and the ability to register at multiple UH campuses.” MyUH uses Sungard Higher Education software.

System capabilities for:

- **Students:** Access e-mail account; register for courses; pay for courses; tuition refund management; add or drop a course; change grading options; purchase textbooks; review financial aid status; view transcripts; view account overview and payments.

- **Faculty:** Enter final grades; check current class lists; override class registration; publish course syllabi and office hours; view past class rosters and teaching schedules.

Background information on the system: In 2002, the university system initiated the project because the lack of an integrated student services system had “been continuously identified as a major problem for the university in nearly every planning forum and discussion of improving services to students.” The university system aimed to integrate the functions of student services across all campus to enhance student services as well as faculty and administrative tasks. The University of Hawaii System also integrated its WebCT course management systems, Sungard’s Banner Student and Financial Aid software, and a new Campus Pipeline Luminis portal (based on an open-source community-based framework) into the MyUH system.

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3 “System Overview,” University of Hawaii (Fall 2008). http://www.hawaii.edu/about/
5 Ibid.
7 “MyUH Faculty Specific Features,” University of Hawaii. http://myuhinfo.hawaii.edu/page/faculty
9 Ibid.
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¹⁰ We were unable to determine if Dr. Lassner was the main contact for MyUH over the holiday period. However, we believe that, if he is not the appropriate contact, he will be able to direct any queries.
University of Alaska’s MyUA

Site address: http://myua.alaska.edu/

Institutions in the system: Three system “hubs” – UA Anchorage, UA Fairbanks, and UA Southeast – operate 19 campuses and colleges total, including Prince William Community College, Kodiak College, Kenai Peninsula College, Military programs, and the College of Rural and Community Development.11,12

Approximate number of students: Over 32,000 full- and part-time students13

Information regarding the computer system: MyUA uses Sungard Higher Education’s Luminis software.14 The system markets itself as being customizable, allowing students and faculty to change the layout and content anytime to suit their needs and preferences.15

System capabilities for:

- **Students:** Apply for admission and monitor application; email; link to Blackboard courses; apply for and monitor financial aid; access to various personal and department calendars; register for courses; share files and photos; order textbooks and school supplies.16

- **Faculty:** Notification if a student does not order textbooks; automatic, weekly updated user statistics; enter grades, override registration, access to student information, access to class lists.1718

Background information on the system: “MyUA’s inception stems from UA President Mark Hamilton’s observation that UAAOnline has evolved and that the university “must take this effort to the next level and establish an interactive virtual environment that connects the entire University of Alaska system.”19 In 2003, UA administrators began work on a system-wide portal that would cover all of the systems’ campuses.20

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11 “Campus Locations,” University of Alaska. http://www.alaska.edu/active/level2/locations.xml
13 Ibid.
14 “MyUA Site Home,” University of Alaska. http://www.alaska.edu/myua/
15 “MyUA Login.” University of Alaska. http://myua.alaska.edu/cp/home/loginf
16 Ibid.
The team set three rules for the portal: 21

1. A student should be able to get to the sought service in three clicks or less.

2. The portal must be customizable for each individual.

3. Each individual should have “a single sign-on,” regardless of the system element being used.

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21 Quoted verbatim from: Ibid.
University of Maine’s MaineStreet

**Site address:** http://mainestreet.maine.edu

**Institutions in the system:** Seven distinct universities and nine regional outreach centers.22

**Approximate number of students:** 32,340 opening fall total headcount in 200923

**Information regarding the computer system:** MaineStreet provides access to the administrative computing system and other system-wide online resources. The system is based on PeopleSoft software. The University of Maine system continues to update the program based on continued input from students, faculty, and staff.24

**System capabilities for:**

- **Students:** Manage financial aid; manage email address; conduct class searches; determine transfer course equivalencies; apply for admission and monitor application; access to campus community information; add, drop, and swap classes; access to academic records; manage personal information; make online payments; access employment information.25

- **Faculty:** Access to admissions and recruitment details; campus community information; student records; online grade reporting.26

**Background information on the system:** Starting in 1996, the University of Maine System was looking to upgrade its information systems to enable more effective and efficient administration. In 2002, the system chose PeopleSoft for its enterprise resource project, and began implementing various components starting in 2003. Updated programs include those for human resources management, “position management,” financial management, admissions and recruitment, financial aid, and student services such as course scheduling, degree auditing, student records, and financial aid.27

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Other Relevant Practices: The University of Wisconsin System’s Common Systems Review Group

Since 1998 the University of Wisconsin System has benefitted from a “common systems review group,” composed of leaders and chief information officers from various campuses and system administration. The group discusses various application adoptions and uses in order to create best-fit technology systems for the University of Wisconsin system, as well as for the individual institutions.

Institutions in the system: 13 four-year campuses; 13 freshman-sophomore campuses; statewide UW-Extension opportunities. 28 Sixteen administrators have seats on the review group.29 Currently, “many of the four-year UW System schools are using a PeopleSoft-based Student Information System (SIS) to improve the functionality of student administrative services, such as student orientation, admissions, graduation, financial aid, and alumni records.”30

Approximate number of students: More than 175,00031

Background information on the system: “The Common Systems Review Group has taken the liberty of imagining some of the possible innovations as the technology tools and policies come into alignment. Especially significant is the possibility of using collaboration across institutions to offer students a more extensive curriculum than they can get at any single institution, and offer it whenever and wherever students need it.”32 It appears that at this stage in its development, the University of Wisconsin’s online system does not cross multiple universities; instead, the institutions within the system share practices and information systems’ best practices to improve application state-wide and benefit from cost savings when possible.

According to the Common Systems roadmap:33

Enabling disparate systems to communicate with each other, guaranteeing a high level of security across all the institutions, and providing a high standard of service for students, faculty and staff across the UW System would be much more difficult, if not impossible, to manage in a model where each institution procured and implemented all of these systems independently.

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28 “About UW System,” University of Wisconsin System (copyright 2007). http://www.wisconsin.edu/about/
33 Ibid., pages 14-15.
The Common Systems Review Group project portfolio includes:

- **Student Information Systems (SIS):** Enable students to register for courses, obtain financial aid, pay bills, monitor their courses to ensure they have all the prerequisites for graduation, arrange advising help, and provide many other tools to enable faculty and students to work more effectively.

- **Shared Financial System (SFS):** Enables UW institutions to manage more efficiently the business of the university, including purchasing, general ledger, payables, billing, and grants management among other processes.

- **Human Resource System (HRS):** When implemented, will allow more efficient management of payroll, benefits, recruitment, appointments, and employee self-service. Human Resource System will be integrated with the Student Information and Shared Financial systems to improve information sharing and reduce duplication of effort.

- **Learning Management System:** Provides tools that facilitate all aspects of faculty instruction and student learning in a Web environment.

- **Library System:** Enables students, faculty and staff to locate and obtain books, journals, media and other learning materials wherever they might be within the UW System.

- **Integration/Interfaces/Middleware:** Facilitate the flow of information across the Student Information, Financial, Human Resource, Learning Management and Library systems. They provide security against personal data theft, help guarantee data integrity, and establish permissions for those people who are allowed access to our academic and administrative systems.

- **Broadband network:** Although not part of the responsibility of CSRG, the broadband network is a shared resource among all UW institutions. It is used for research and education, and is being built with an architecture that will provide dramatic savings as compared with commercial costs when UW institutions require more network capacity.

- **Single vendor SIS/SFS/HRS:** Oracle/PeopleSoft is the vendor of the University’s three largest and most complex systems. Oracle plans to better integrate its product suites with a new technical architecture sometime around 2011 or 2012. This new architecture, named “Fusion,” will require

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34 Quoted with slight variation from: Ibid.
the UW to decide when and if it will make the investment to move to Fusion.

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