

IRC Minutes 11 February 2000

Present: Bob DeSieno (Chair), Pola Baytelman, Ruth Copans, Jon Cotton, Leo Geoffrion, Ann Henderson, Michael Marx , Rory McVeigh, Roy Meyers, Joseph Thornton, and Susan Zappen.

1. The minutes of the February 4 meeting were reviewed and approved.
2. Ann **Henderson** presented a report on her recent meeting in Louisiana about the Oracle Project and updated the committee on changes and developments. **Henderson** explained that Oracle has renamed the project Oracle Student Solutions rather than Oracle Student System. This new name reflects a more important change: rather than creating its own new programs for all parts of the package, Oracle now plans to offer a blend of existing modules and new software. For example, the work of the Admissions office involves both recruiting and marketing, **Henderson** explained. Oracle already has a Customer Relations Module (CRM) which it will blend with the new recruiting module. Schedules and audit programs will come from a third party. This design change is so that Oracle does not reinvent the proverbial wheel. The student aid program will be an adaptation of a package from San Diego State University. At the South Carolina meeting, college and university representatives expressed concern about how these mixes will be integrated. **Henderson** reported that Oracle assured everyone that the modules will all work together.

Henderson reported that the discouraging news is that one person records across the entire system won't happen until the next version. Synchronization issues between the Customer Relations Module and the Student System still need to be resolved. Leo **Geoffrion** explained that Skidmore had already built an infrastructure that allows one unique ID number per person so that the user can cross reference. Ken **Hapemen** suggested that the cross-referencing problem in the Oracle project is not as bad as it sounds; it is just "clunky." **Henderson** went on to explain that configuring the system and background set-up will be a major time commitment for Skidmore. She noted that one advantage to new Oracle approach is that it will allow us to modify and configure the larger package specifically for Skidmore. **Henderson** also reported that the Student Billing Module contained major holes in the second go round design. In response to an action list from participants, Oracle is developing a round three version of this module.

Henderson distributed a calendar of testing dates. Beta testing of the Oracle package will begin in June in South Carolina. Further testing will occur in July and August at Oracle sites in Reston, VA. Release is planned for November.

Geoffrion explained that Customer Relation Software was originally designed for web commerce, but in this application, students are seen as the "customers." CRM can gather information from a variety of sources, such as offices and individuals who have dealt with a student. Such applications could be immediately relevant for work done by the Helpdesk, Admissions, and Alumni campaigns.

Hapemen saw advantages and disadvantages to the Oracle "solution." Using existing modules may not provide the best fit possible. On the other hand, using CRM puts us in a mainstream position for remaining current in our programs since advances occur much more rapidly in software used in the commercial world than software in the academic world. **Ruth Copans** expressed further concern about the "fit" of this approach, asking whether the system is responding to our needs or forcing us to adapt to a Business perspective. It was noted that the Admissions Office already follows a business model and the College would still maintain the option of not using certain aspects of the program. **Hapemen** noted the CRM are very configurable.

Bob **Desieno** asked about the working implications of the Oracle project for faculty and staff. **Henderson** explained the main difference will be a shift to "self-service," using the web as a mechanism for information (rosters, grades, degree audits). Rather than the Registrar's Office doing such projects in bulk, the Oracle project will allow the information to be readily accessible on a case by case basis. **Geoffrion** noted that CRM reduces the amount of mechanical handling of information, making it easier for people to ask questions about the information. Therefore, **Geoffrion** suspects that the amount of public contact for the Registrar's office will increase. **Desieno** asked if the Oracle project will allow faculty to consolidate what it does. **Geoffrion** expressed that this is the aim.

Henderson outlined the proposed implementation process: Spring 2001 registration will be done mostly on Oracle. Summer 2001 registration will be the first full Oracle registration. Grades will be on Oracle by 2002.

Michael **Marx** inquired about the training that will be available to faculty and staff. **Geoffrion** noted that first the College must train the trainers. He suggested that IRTF-II needs to develop a network of local experts. The system involves password access, but otherwise operates on a point and click method. It is very teachable.

3. **Desieno** led a discussion of IRC agenda issues during the second half of the meeting. He suggested that the IRC needs a regularized schedule of tasks and issues to respond to as the council moves through the academic year.

Copans noted that it was extremely helpful for IRTF-II to hear from other (nonacademic) offices about their information technology needs and concerns. She suggested that an annual meeting for such conversations could be folded into the IRC calendar. **Hapemen** suggested we also include the chairs of committees such as FPCC and CEPP.

Geoffrion noted that regular issues facing IRC include the budget, with budget requests being made in mid-December and budget decisions being completed in mid-March.

Hapemen noted that in October CITS provides a report on the status of computing on campus.

Henderson suggested that the human element of information technology should also regularly come before the IRC (training, uses in the classroom and workplace). It was agreed that training needs in general should be reviewed, with possibly Phylise Banner attending a meeting.

Taking the multi-year perspective, **Geoffrion** also noted that in the past the IRC has conducted many information technology surveys that should be repeated with regularity.

Sue **Zappen** recommended that getting a report each semester from the IRC Copyright subcommittee would also be an important annual agenda item.

Copans also advised that we not overlook how students are functioning in the digital culture and using information technology resources. She suggested that the IRC could learn a good deal by talking regularly with students.

Desieno concluded by stating that for the next meeting he would draft a calendar for the IRC based upon the items raised in this discussion.

4. The discussion of the proliferation of "nonessential" email at Skidmore was postponed for a later meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Michael Steven Marx