From the Program Manager's desk.....
Alan Crooks, Student Administration Program Manager

Dear FlexSIS Users,

We are now getting to the "pointy end" of both Releases 5.5 and 6.0 and are continuing to make good progress.

Development is proceeding apace on both Releases and the new Graduations, Results Processing and Credits modules of Release 5.5 are well into System Test and have been reviewed with User Groups. Prizes & Scholarships and Exam Arrangements will be entering System Test very shortly. We're looking forward to taking a peek at these modules with you at the next Faculty Forum.

We have all found the User Reference Group structures we implemented as part of R5.5 and R6.0 to be very useful and the enthusiastic involvement of key user representatives has really added value to the process of understanding and documenting user requirements.

The initial delivery of Release 5.5 is scheduled for the weekend of 18 October and details of necessary interruption to system availability will be distributed well before hand.

Planning for POW 2004 is well under way and it is scheduled to launch as normal on 1 October.

The Student Administration Management Reference Group has just agreed the objectives and scope for Release 6.5, due in the 4th quarter of 2004, which will see International Office and the Faculties of Health Sciences and Rural Management come onto FlexSIS. The Release 6.5 Project Board will convene in September and commence detailed planning.

As I say to anyone who wants to listen, the replacement of SRS really is a "once in a lifetime" event and teamwork will continue to be the secret of our success.

So I'll close by thanking you for your support to date and we're looking forward to continuing to work closely with you in the future.
New FlexSIS Website being launched...

Aiming to improve access to information about FlexSIS including more user help, the FlexSIS Website is currently under review and development. A new, improved site will be launched on 26 August to coincide with the Faculty Forum.

Based on University-wide design standards developed by the Major Projects Group (MPG), the new FlexSIS site will feature more information and a more intuitive navigational environment.

The Website upgrade is being performed by the members of the FlexSIS Change Management Team and will include documentation of new 5.5/6.0 features. Please note that until the release of 5.5, users needing to consult how to do certain processes in FlexSIS should consult the User Guides page, as is the current practice.

With the new Website, help for FlexSIS will be via an interface that is designed to be intuitive, standardised and easy to use while users are working directly with FlexSIS. Explanations of FlexSIS tasks will be available from the website so users will get the information they need for their current activity. Basically this means that users will have a comprehensive area in our website to complete all new tasks associated with the upcoming releases of 5.5 and 6.0.

The design of our new site is made possible using HTML and a simple JavaScript program that is compatible with the vast majority of web browsers. Our Web master has been busily testing our new site in most of the major browsers in use around USYD and we are pleased to report that all browsers from Netscape 2.0 and Internet Explorer 3.0 will be able to access our site.

The FlexSIS Reporting Portal...(FRP)

As reported in our last edition of FlexSIS news, users will be aware that the FlexSIS Reporting Portal has been developed to provide FlexSIS reports more easily to University staff. We reported that a trial was successfully carried out and received well by users. We are now in train to deliver this portal to users in October 2003. Currently, we are trying to clean up some of the reports and migrate others that have been developed since the initial trial.

Once released to the wider community in October it will be known as “FRP” – FlexSIS Reporting Portal. At our last Faculty Forum, users were shown the extensive capabilities the portal can deliver for the retrieval of information from FlexSIS. We intend to launch the portal at our October Faculty Forum and users should be aware that it is all on track to coincide with the release of 5.5. The main features of FRP will be:

- Accessibility by any modern web browser (IE6, Netscape7, etc.)
- Scheduling when reports will run.
- Reports run in the background thereby freeing the PC immediately for other activities.
- Reports can be shared and circulated among staff.

Any comments/feedback about this new method of reporting from FlexSIS are always most welcome.

FCCC What is it???

FlexSIS Change Control Committee!

The FlexSIS Change Control Committee (FCCC) was first convened in mid 2002 with the objective of reviewing, approving, prioritising, and scheduling change requests submitted to the MPG Student Administration Program group via the HEAT System, be they Enhancements or Application Fixes.

The FCCC comprises a mixture of business and support groups working together to ensure a balance of knowledge across business and technical issues. Representatives are from the Student Centre, four Faculties (rotating members), MPG Student Administration Program, ITS Applications and Support Services.

The rotational positions reflect the need to broaden ownership and awareness of the FlexSIS system. Faculty positions are held for six month appointments and then reallocated (staggered so as not to have a complete changeover all at once).

FlexSIS would like to thank the outgoing members who have just finished their terms:

- AnnaMaria Brancato – Faculty of Engineering
- Robyn Longhurst – Sydney Conservatorium of Music
- Lynda Rose – Faculty of Nursing

In saying goodbye to past members the FlexSIS team would also like to welcome our new members:

- Sarah Brecknock – Faculty of Medicine
Roving the trenches: A user's perspective.....

Nicholas Strobbe from School of Public Health speaks to our reporter on how FlexSIS has revolutionised enrolments for the school......

FlexSIS recently in conjunction with staff of the Student Centre enabled the School of Public Health to enrol students for Semester 2, 2003 via the web.

Now that the School of Public Health has enabled Web enrolments could you describe how it has helped to manage your workloads for Semester 2, 2003?

“Having Web enrolments for the School of Public Health in Semester 2, 2003 allowed us to work efficiently and vastly improve our productivity levels in areas that did not deal with enrolments specifically. With our Student Services Manager being away on Long Service Leave, the schools administrative area was able to continue normally without having to employ additional staff for the enrolment period.”

Have you found that Web Enrolments have minimised the amount of students streaming into your office to ask for help?

“Yes, radically. I believe there was a 90% reduction of the circa 400 coursework students who once would only be able to enrol at the Student Services counter. In principle Online enrolments and variations gives the University an avenue of having Universality in terms of all students enrolling in the same way: Accuracy in terms that students enter the information therefore reducing error rates in data entry etc; and, finally, Reliability in terms that students and staff were confident that once a student went in and varied an enrolment, the data was in the system and only had to be entered once.”

Could you describe the process you went through to get your School ready for Web Enrolments?

“We were aware that some faculties and schools had already put WEV in place, so I therefore asked the FlexSIS team to give me a hand in trying to get this done for us. Basically an initial meeting with the FlexSIS team took place and this resulted in them ascertaining what was indeed needed to start the process. This would not have been able to take place if I did not have the help and support of the FlexSIS Team, The Student Centre (David Bowan – Student Centre Director, Steve McQuilty) and Dr Jim Ward.

I had to provide a list of all the UoSs that would need to be enabled to Dr Jim Ward so that when our students wanted to add or vary their enrolment the system was ready to handle them.

Was there a need for you to educate your students on how to enrol via the web and, if so, how did you do this?

“It was absolutely essential that we got our students ready for this change and we communicated this change in several different ways:

A) Email to all enrolled students with specific details and information about the proposed changes as well as listing the benefits that the new system would provide. We sent out two emails, the initial one to explain the new processes and the dates that were needed to be observed, the second email acted as a reminder that the process was happening.

B) Public Notices were placed on all noticeboards around the school advising students that this would be the new way of enrolling, along with flyers being made to post in the Student Services area to reinforce that this new system was now taking place as of 2nd semester.

C) We championed the lecturers of the courses, who advised students of the new system, so in tutorials and in lectures, our lecturers got on board to inform our students.
Did you have any major problems with enrolling students in this new way and what advice would you give to other areas when they are to adopt this system of enrolling students?

“There were no major problems encountered. The system works efficiently and very well! In terms of days gone by we had, like I said earlier, up to 400 students arriving at the Student Services counter to do their enrolments. This time around we had 3 students who came to the counter who encountered problems and of those 3 each of them had problems connecting to the Internet not problems with using WEV. I would suggest that any area going to adopt this new and efficient way of enrolling students should initially plan for it to happen at the beginning of Semester 1, as this way students get to use the process right from the beginning of their candidature. It is essential that students are aware that this type of enrolling will take place and that a direct marketing campaign is undertaken to achieve the high level of success that we here at Public Health experienced. As far as I am concerned this type of enrolment system works to a student’s advantage, because it can be done at any time, even while a student may be eating a pizza when watching a movie, it definitely takes away the angst of having to stand in long queues, once it is done, it is done.”

One last note from Nicholas on WEV:

“Once a student experiences this way of enrolling they will never want to go back.”

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**FlexSIS Quick Tips.....**

Do you ever find yourself wondering how certain processes on FlexSIS could be done easier? If you find any tips that work for you, please let us know so we can share them with everyone.

Here are some tips to stop incidents of OUS (Over Use Syndrome) a product of using your mouse in times of heavy data entry periods. Try using these Short-Cut keys to minimise mouse reliance and all that pain:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key</th>
<th>Action Performed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F12</td>
<td>Save a record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F5</td>
<td>Clear Form without saving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTRL+R</td>
<td>Tab page in reverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTRL+T</td>
<td>Tab page to move forward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spacebar</td>
<td>To check a box or radio button</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Reporting a problem or wanting a change to FlexSIS**

Contact the Support Team in the Student Centre on 9351 5445 or email: flexsis@mail.usyd.edu.au.

The team will log your problem or request on the HEAT system and advise you of the job (ticket) number. After the issue has been assessed, it will be assigned for action to a group in either ITS, FlexSIS Development or the Student Centre.

Requests for enhancements and changes, as you now know, get handed over to the FlexSIS Change Control Committee and then actioned accordingly.

You should receive some feedback about your issue from the person assigned to deal with it. If you want to follow up on your issue before that time, please contact the FlexSIS Support Team on 9351 5445 or flexsis@mail.usyd.edu.au and have your ticket number at hand.

To help us improve our service to you we need your feedback. When a FlexSIS HEAT call is closed we send an email (with a satisfaction survey attached) to the person who raised the call. This satisfaction survey has recently had a facelift to make it even easier to answer than before. The survey will only take a few minutes to fill out and gives the FlexSIS team important feedback about our level of service to our users. The FlexSIS team looks forward to reading through your surveys.

**Your feedback**

The FlexSIS team is always available to receive your feedback and comments. Users’ perspectives and ideas are always welcome; let’s work together in making FlexSIS the best Student Administration System around.

Antony Talone
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