Feature interview
Angelina Manoto, Director, Student Administration Program talks with Matthew da Silva of the Communications and Training Team.

After four months on the job, taking stock of the status of FlexSIS, setting up the student administration program, attending to its more immediate project commitments, aligning project delivery with project management methodology and systems development lifecycle disciplines, agreeing delivery standards, establishing budgets and program financial management processes, and recruiting new staff, Angelina Manoto is busy but optimistic about the immediate future. FlexSIS “needs to have an ongoing program to basically help it grow with the needs of the business”.

“FlexSIS needs to go forward in a number of ways,” she says. “The vision and strategy for the future student administration system needs to be defined. That’s something we need to tackle as part of the FlexSIS NT project. We need to understand the role that FlexSIS will play as part of that strategic vision. But right now there are a number of key functionalities that the business people are clamouring for that need to be addressed within FlexSIS as a matter of urgency.”

Having worked at a university before, she is familiar with the challenges involved in establishing and following through on a number of large projects at the same time. She was the director of Business Systems Development Services at the University of New South Wales. In that role, she oversaw all aspects of systems and project delivery of the central IT division.

What did she think of FlexSIS when she first saw it? “At first I thought: OK, it must have taken a lot of resources and partnership to put together a system supporting the university’s entire student administration function. It was a bold attempt and sets the university apart from the majority of universities, who have opted for a package solution.”

But there are areas for improvement. Feedback from FlexSIS users and having exposure to the number of DCRs (data change requests), HEAT calls (user complaints) and performance problems indicate that while the majority of the core functions are in the system, there are problems and functional gaps that need to be addressed.

Another area she thinks needs improvement is in the management of FlexSIS data. A data dictionary is on the drawing board. “We need to agree on and document data definitions including business and transformation rules supporting data. We also need to address data governance, ownership and stewardship, etc. Student data and information is a core strategic asset of the university and must be afforded the operational and strategic management it deserves.”

“There are six projects that are the major thrust for the immediate future,” she says. The first release of scholarships management has just gone live, with another due towards the end of November. Devolution of the credit assessment function has just been completed, including training and user documentation. Then there’s the research higher degree student management project, which includes three or four releases (see related article). Online enrolment is a top priority project, with an initial deadline of first semester 2007, and full implementation for all students by first semester 2008 (see related article). Then there’s regulatory compliance and risk management. And, finally, there’s FlexSIS NT.

The Program is also involved in completing a couple of essential data migration tasks involving Orange campus (now part of Charles Sturt University) and Cumberland campus for the Faculty of Health Sciences.

There are also initiatives lined up for next year as part of the work overflow from this year as well as new projects being identified as the Program’s roadmap is defined for the next few years.
“It’s an exciting time for the program. It certainly is at the centre of a lot of the changes that will happen to FlexSIS. However, I would like to stress that the Program is not responsible for the day-to-day support of FlexSIS, but for the development of new core functions, which are done through projects. Also, while FlexSIS is a major part of it, the Program is not just about FlexSIS. The Program is meant to encompass all other systems that form part of a full end-to-end automated student administration process. At the moment, having been here four months, I’ve only scratched the surface, if at all. There’s a lot more work to be done to be able to paint a picture of the total program supported by a detailed, more coherent and integrated plan.”

Recruitments & Revisions

Following the arrival of new chief information officer (CIO) Rob Mackinnon, central ICT (Information and Communications Technology) is set to undergo organisational change. Some changes have already taken place.

Oversight of FlexSIS development has passed to another new arrival, Angelina Manoto, the new director of the Student Administration Program. Angelina previously headed the Business Systems Development Services group at the University of New South Wales.

Aiming at increasing faculty satisfaction with the delivery of new functionality, she has broken the Devolved Services Project (DSP) down into component parts. To service the new structure, several new project managers have been engaged.

One of them, Suzana Sofrevska, joined the team last month. She is working on the online enrolment and research higher degree student management projects. See box.

John Dawlings joins the Student Administration Program as senior project manager responsible for scholarships and regulatory compliance. John has 30 years’ IT industry experience and over the last three years, has worked with the University of Technology, Sydney, as a program manager with responsibility for delivering projects relating to student systems.

Shane Youlten joins the Student Administration Program as an information architect. Shane comes with 19 years’ IT industry experience and has worked at enterprise, solution and technical levels of IT architecture in a number of organizations. His most recent engagements were with the Commonwealth Bank and the University of New South Wales.

To better coordinate the expectations of faculties and ICT capabilities, Christine Stephens has been appointed business systems strategy coordinator for the Student Administration Program. Unlike most recent appointments, Christine was recruited internally: she has 18 years of experience in central and faculty administration at several universities.

Peter Whitfield has also joined ICT as director of Application Services. Peter has an extensive background in system development, and continues a strong interest in its technical as-
pects. His last position was in a senior development role at the Commonwealth Bank. Peter’s previous roles have included manager of the Asia-Pacific IT Development Centre at Cisco; General Manager Development for Zivo (a Web integration business); and a period as a researcher at the University of Newcastle.

Geoffrey Brown has been appointed to the new role of Distributed ICT director. Geoffrey has had a career in consulting and line management with a variety of firms, including RailCorp, Qantas, Allianz and MLC/Lend Lease. At Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu he was director of Information Technology where he brought about significant reforms in IT delivery and support.

Jim O’Brien, senior tester, has left ICT. New testers are Hemanth Singrikonda and Hemant Narsey. New in the Development team is Petros Petrou. Some old hands are returning to do more work with Application Services: Adam Simmonds and Grant Carlson.

**New Functionality**

**Online Enrolment Project**

Over the past few years The University of Sydney has extended the range of administrative tasks that students can perform online. Available student self-administration functions are: pre-enrolment; access to class and examination timetables; the ability to change address; and variation of enrolment. Students may also view Commonwealth Assistance Notices, exam locations, exam seat numbers, and examination results, and pay enrolment fees online. The International Office Web acceptance-of-offer facility was added recently.

But among the Group of Eight universities, there are only two that offer no online enrolment. The University of Sydney is one.

The project provides an opportunity for the university to extend online facilities. It will allow them to self-administer acceptance of offers and to perform their initial enrolment. The online facility will improve and streamline administrative processes and enable the management of a substantial number of commencing enrolments, improve the efficiency of managing the enrolment process (with the aim of reducing enrolment queues) and therefore improve perception of the university by offering a higher level of customer service to students.

Phase 1 will include selected cohorts of undergraduate students (for courses that don’t require significant academic advice) who will apply via UAC for admission on 1 Semester, 2007. Further phases will be implemented later.

While in-person enrolment sessions serve to introduce the students to the university as well as confirming their personal details, receiving requests for Commonwealth assistance, providing academic advice, receiving payment of course fees, issuing a student card, and issuing UniKey account details, the online enrolment functionality will provide improved access and meaning to course and subject information.

**Research Higher Degree Student Management Project**

**Released in January**

- If a research student needs to be re-admitted, the system copies the existing data files from the past admission and asks for user verification before automatically re-entering all the relevant degree (student) data.

This change allows a research student to be re-admitted to the same degree code without the user needing to re-enter all of the student’s data, in regard to the degree being undertaken.

- Where a student has been on acknowledged leave (i.e. ‘Suspended’) an enrolment can proceed as a re-enrolment, without re-admission.

- If a student’s enrolment has not been completed, and it is known that they are returning, they can be processed as an enrolment variation, i.e. there is no requirement for re-admission.

- Data collection fields have been clarified. These are data-quality driven changes and have been acted on in the following ways:

  - Collection of Field of Education has been added to
assist with funding distribution; clarification of Residency Status (where the value may be 'Unknown'); update of data field names (Previous EFTSL becomes Previous Relevant External EFTSL), for ease of use by administrative staff.

**Planned for November**

Overall, analysis is complete and internal testing of new functionality is due to start as this newsletter is issued.

The Student Centre will continue to provide graduand assessment of research students and high-level management and administration support, but day-to-day records management will be devolved to the faculties.

The following functionality is planned for release in November. The new release involves increased access by faculties to directly manage student records and files on FlexSIS.

Faculty and department users will be able to directly enter student details and information into FlexSIS, as required by business operations.

- EFTSL calculation correction.
  
  This involves correcting the rules using the census date, for calculation and storage of EFTSL, and to enable consistency when used throughout FlexSIS and extracted for reports.
  
  - Supervisor management: data entry and day-to-day management.
    
    Will allow data entry of all supervisors, correction of their categorisation when associated with a student, correct end-dating of student association and re-association of supervisors to a student record, and supervisor or student allocation and load per department.
    
    - Student activity milestones.
      
      Activity types such as attendance pattern, leave, Annual Progress Report outcomes can be selected by faculty and department staff to monitor and track student activity.
      
    - Better management of student Annual Progress Report (APR).
      
      Allows the APR cover page to be produced from FlexSIS. This will provide true confirmation of the information that is held on a student’s file and for collection of any changes in the student’s details for data entry into FlexSIS.
      
    - Improved and relevant reports for management.
      
      Re-evaluate the reports, to allow clearer selection of information and correct information to be included (as requested by the user) in a timely manner.

**Planned for next year**

- Thesis examination: correspondence, reminders, and examiners.
  
  Full support of thesis examination process activities allows recording of: intention to submit, examiners (and approval), and tracking of examination (timeline) correspondence requirements. Activity milestones such as results etc. are also to be recorded.
  
  - Quarterly Report.
    
    Will be able to be produced through the FlexSIS Web reporting tool (FRP) alleviating the need for a manual compile in the case of faulty administration.

**Preview: Research Higher Degree Student Management**

A number of new FlexSIS screens are being developed to provide RHDSM functionality. One of them is previewed on the next page, but the picture shown, which has been copied from the functional specification, may not exactly match the final version (that will go live in Production).

**Candidature**

Candidature event details will be able to be added on several screens: enrolment variation (on next page), pre-enrolment variation, new enrolment wizard, and new pre-enrolment wizard.

An event that is added will determine several other items of data, including semester status, attendance pattern, course status, and not enrol reason, as shown in the table on the next page. Associated dates are also updated based on the candidature event. Security settings determine which users are able to add events, and when they can be added. The course status will be updated by a process called a batch job that is run at the beginning of each semester.
### Event Details

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<th>Event Type</th>
<th>Semester Status</th>
<th>Attendance Pattern</th>
<th>Course Status</th>
<th>Not enrol reason</th>
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<td>Part Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time away</td>
<td>Information</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Leave of Absence</td>
<td>Information</td>
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