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

Dear Users,

It's good to be writing to you again and I’m looking forward to catching up with you at the Faculty Forum later this month. Last Friday I was over in H08 to bid a fond farewell to the mainframe that has run SRS for the last twelve years. It brought to mind the significant changes that will be taking place toward the end of this year as we move all existing SRS functionality onto FlexSIS.

This is really a “once in a lifetime” event and all our planning, both within my team and with the users, recognises its significance.

There are many challenges to make this a success and the scale of the enterprise should not be underestimated. However, I remain confident that the partnership we have forged in the last twelve months between the business and the FlexSIS team make a successful outcome very achievable.

The Project Boards have endorsed a launch window extending from late September through to late January which will see at least two deliveries of software and significant data migration and reconciliation activity between SRS and FlexSIS.

A key focus has been to minimise impact on operations (though given the scale of the change some impact is inevitable) and to ensure that next year’s Semester 1 enrolments are at least as successful as this year’s. The replacement of SRS will be a true watershed in Student Administration within the University and will form the platform to broaden and deepen the capability of FlexSIS to meet business needs. In 2004 we plan to bring International Office into FlexSIS as well as extending coverage to include the enrolment of Cumberland and Orange students on FlexSIS.

I look forward to reminiscing with you in January next year as we bid a fond farewell to SRS, which has served us very well.
**Release 5.5 Update -- Farewell**

*Graham Trent - Project Manager*

FlexSIS Release 5.5 has progressed sufficiently so as to enable software development to be well underway. This has been reached via a great deal of effort on the part of Faculty, Department and Student Centre staff who have made time to be involved in the requirements gathering and functional design phases over the past several months. Some aspects of the functional design are still work in progress, but all are planned to be finalised by the end of July.

The initial target implementation date for FlexSIS Release 5.5 is late October, with a further release of software mid December to coincide with the implementation of FlexSIS Release 6.0. It is important to note that key business processes supported by SRS such as Examination Arrangements, Results Processing, Student Progression and Graduations will be maintained on SRS and allowed to complete for this year. SRS will not be available from the start of 2004, as all required equivalent functions will be available on FlexSIS by that date.

**Release 6.0 Update......**

*Mike Webb - Project Manager*

The Student Financials release due to be implemented in January 2004 will see the retirement of SFIS (PeopleSoft 6.0) and the addition of significant new enhancements to the existing FlexSIS application. Work has already started on the customisations required to the University’s Accounts Receivable system to accommodate Release 6.0. The core of the release will be centred on a complete student financial history view. Every time something financial happens to a student a detailed record will be kept enabling fast enquiries with a central place to store all information.

In addition to this, FlexSIS will become the source for fee, charging and disbursement information by the introduction of a sophisticated payment allocation process that will meet the University’s complex business rules. It will be possible to determine the exact amount of revenue received down to an individual UoS and report this in a variety of ways to suit our diverse needs.

**WARP -- Web Access Reporting Portal**

*Matthew Cawley – Application Architect*

Over the past six months, MPG in collaboration with Faculties and the Student Centre has been conducting a trial for an alternative delivery of FlexSIS reports using the web. The trial was initially undertaken by 22 selected representatives. The goal was to evaluate the merit of moving all the FlexSIS reports away from the existing application to the more widely accessible web.

WARP provides FlexSIS reports through a web portal to University staff. There are several new features that WARP offers when compared to the existing FlexSIS report generator. These include:

- 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. Just to name a few.

With any trial of new technology, there are teething problems and lessons learnt; for example we realised that not all users have the required up-to-date browsers. In the closing months of the trial, a survey was distributed to the participants seeking feedback. The majority of responses indicated that WARP offered many improvements in managing FlexSIS reporting needs.

The FlexSIS team is currently evaluating the trial – stay tuned for more details on WARP.

**Comings and Goings at FlexSIS**

There have been several staff changes in the FlexSIS team. The FlexSIS team would like to acknowledge the efforts of our outgoing staff and wish them well in all their adventures for the future.

**Jenny Beaton** Our Change Manager, departed the University after 32 years just before Easter to work in the community sector as a Training Manager and her replacement **Antony Talone** (formerly at the Conservatorium of Music and recently the Staff Support and Development Unit), started with the group in May. He looks forward to delving into the issues FlexSIS presents to users and is keen to meet users and hear from them to find out what suggestions and concerns they may have as the system continues to evolve and takes over as the primary student administration system.

**Kathryn Marshall** has been appointed as the FlexSIS Program Administrator. This role involves administering and taking all the minutes for the FlexSIS Change Control Committee (FCCC) and the many project boards the team is involved with. Kathryn also deals with the issues that are logged into the HEAT system. *(See article on reporting a problem!)*

**Julie Chamberlain** has been appointed on a short-term contract as a Technical Writer to help us with planning new
documentation that arises from the upcoming releases. Look out for all the new user documentation as it gets developed on the FlexSIS website at: www.flexsis.usyd.edu.au

Others that have departed our team to move onto other projects like having babies and doing sea change type things are:

Ray Ronan, Patrick Flynn, Gina Jerkovic, Mel Corby and Melissa Thomas – we wish them well.

**Paving the road ahead……**

Annie Pye – Business Integration Manager

By the end of 2003, following the replacement of the legacy Student Records System (SRS), FlexSIS will be the key underlying system critical to the efficient and successful operation of student administration within the University. In early 2004, FlexSIS will also have enhanced financial capabilities, improving the interface to the University of Sydney’s financial system PeopleSoft and providing easier access to student financial transactional information.

In late 2004, we will have completed the integration of parallel student administration systems by bringing into FlexSIS the International Office, Cumberland Campus and Orange Campus. All University students will therefore be managed by FlexSIS from first enrolments in 2005.

The development priorities for FlexSIS from 2005 are currently under review by the Management Reference Group (MRG) which is responsible for the strategic planning of FlexSIS. Possible options under consideration are the introduction of a course repository to improve the production of handbooks and the dissemination via the web; further on-line access for student self-administration; improved student progression and degree audit processing; added functionality regarding research student tracking; and the management of distance education services.

Any suggestions for future developments in FlexSIS are always gratefully received and seriously considered.

If you have any ideas, please contact Antony Talone on atalone@mail.usyd.edu.au or 9351 8082.

---

**Roving the trenches: A user's perspective…..**

Martin Hesse from Architecture speaks to our intrepid reporter……

Our reporter Antony Talone has been out in the field finding out what the scoop is on all things FlexSIS….

Antony posed some questions to Martin, and here is what he had to say:

**Are you confident that with the retiring of SRS, FlexSIS will indeed be able to produce everything a faculty needs?**

“Yes, it might not be as fast to access as SRS seems to be, but FlexSIS can do much more than SRS ever did or ever will be able to do.”

**What are the most valuable features for you that FlexSIS will provide that SRS currently does not?**

**Reporting** – “I believe that being able to have the Just in Time factor for desired reports far outweighs the current way of extracting information from SRS.”

**Immediacy of Information** – “Enrolment forms used to take a week to view, FlexSIS will provide us with accurate information at our finger tips…..FlexSIS will allow us to have a more Customer Service approach to our work and by being able to do a lot of the processes that were once centrally managed will also hopefully reduce error rates in data entry.”

**How would you like to see FlexSIS developed for the future?**

“Consultatively….I mean keep in touch with the users of the system so that we feel we have input into the system that ultimately we are using.”

“I would like to be more in control of the reports I can access…It would be nice to be able to pick and choose the reports that are pertinent for my situation.”

“Make the system faster….the speed of the system has improved over time, but it is crucial to have contingencies in place so that the speed of retrieving information is not a slow exercise.”

**Do you envisage FlexSIS creating more work for you and your faculty or do you think it will ease the workload in some cases?**

“Expectations from management will rise due to the ease of retrieving information from the system, and I think some functions that are currently being carried out centrally will most probably be devolved.”
“While FlexSIS will not ease the workload in heavy periods, what it will do is allow us to use a system that is logical in its processes and therefore become much more customer focussed than we have currently been able to be using SRS.”

How would you like to see the FlexSIS team communicate to users?

“I would like to see more training sessions held with focus on the big picture of the whole system. There are many areas to cross when using FlexSIS and it would be useful to collaborate with other areas to see if processes are being carried out in the most efficient way….For example, I would like to see a training session on how to produce Handbooks each year…..”

“Annual sessions on the key functions of FlexSIS eg Admissions, Pre-Enrolment, Graduand Assessment and any new things that can make our lives in the trenches easier.”

FlexSIS would like to thank Martin Hesse from Architecture for taking the time to speak with our roving reporter….Look out for Antony on campus; you may just be the next voice in FlexSIS news…..

……and one last note from Martin….

“I am optimistic that FlexSIS can deliver so much more than SRS can or ever has…."

FlexSIS Quick Tips…..

Do you ever find yourself wondering how certain processes on FlexSIS could be done easier? This new column in our regular newsletter will give users tips to make your navigation and use of the system more effective and streamlined. 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 User 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>CTRL + T</td>
<td>To move forward across Tab Pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTRL + R</td>
<td>To move backwards across Tab Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tab</td>
<td>To move between fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTRL + Ins</td>
<td>To Insert a UoS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTRL + Del</td>
<td>To Delete a UoS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 are assessed by the FlexSIS Change Control Committee (FCCC), with representatives from Faculties, the Student Centre and the FlexSIS Development Team.

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.

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
atalone@mail.usyd.edu.au
Editor, FlexSIS Newsletter.