

January 20, 2011

**JEFF BARRETT**

PPM 200-45 Review Coordinator  
Informational and Educational Technology

**Re: PPM 200-45 Review: Graduate Tracking System**

The Davis Division of the Academic Senate forwarded your request for review to all of the standing committees of the Division as well as Faculty Executive Committees within each college/professional school. The Committee on Information and Technology, Graduate Council and the Letters and Sciences Faculty Executive Committee submitted responses.

Any computer system that reduces data entry time and requires less maintenance is to be welcomed. Though the system is in an early stage of development, it appears to provide important increased functionality to departments. Several graduate advisers have commented that they are happy with the trial version, although the system will need to be modified for individual departmental/program use.

The Division received specific suggestions and questions or concerns about the proposal we believe must be passed along and reviewed before the proposal moves onto the next review stage.

Specific Questions and Concerns

It seems clear that efforts are being duplicated because the Office of Graduate Studies is proposing a system which may duplicate some of the functionality included in the CBS system outline. Further, we understand Graduate Studies is proposing deployment in Fall 2011. This is a serious duplication with financial and workload ramifications. We believe by bringing this to your attention it will be remedied immediately. We respectfully request written confirmation that this duplication has been noted and is being managed.

The need/goal for such a system has not been clearly articulated. Thus, it should be made clear before development commences. There was also an omission from this proposal regarding how much training would be required for new people to learn this system (and how long such training would take). It might also be useful to provide clarification of what would happen if this system was adopted by all graduate groups. Would CBS be prepared to let the system become centralized under campus IT control? It may be that the 200-45 review is taking place too late in the process as it appears significant resources have already been invested in this project in spite of the fact that important issues (in particular security, secure hosting and system duplication) have not been resolved.

Concerns were expressed regarding system development and maintenance cost. We believe the proposal must be refined to articulate how such expenses will be funded. Further it appears a campus-wide assessment of the true cost of operating this system may result and thus it is critical to resolve the funding issues before the development phase is launched. Some respondents questioned assessing a use fee to other campus users (colleges and schools). Perhaps the campus should explore the need for such a system and determine if there is a centralized way to manage the expense rather than setting up a new recharge structure/fee when all campus units are reducing expenses and managing with less funding overall. The following specific and noteworthy questions were posed in responses:

- Why must departments pay to use a valuable application developed by a UC Davis unit? If the system is ultimately considered to be sufficiently useful to warrant campus availability, it would seem more appropriate to offer it as a central service without charge.
- An annual \$250 fee per user is cited, with a maximum of 60 users. Does the term "user" refer to an individual or to a department/program? What does this fee pay for and how was it determined?
- Who will bear the cost of adapting the application to the needs of different colleges and departments? How will each unit be able to determine its adoption costs? What customization options will be allowed and by whom will these options be implemented?

### Suggestions

The design of the system should be such that it allows for implementation using standard cyber-safety measures to assure confidentiality of personal data. Additionally, the campus should examine whether creation of a graduate tracking system requires amendment of existing computing policy or even creation of new policy to assure the personal information contained in such a system is fully secured.

Should this proposed system move forward, it may be prudent to develop agreements with users for system development and maintenance support and associated cost such as; level of support, system customization, and enhancement. An agreement should address how to handle future inquiries about updates, bug-fixing, training etc. for a specified period of time; and provide all the necessary background information on operating systems, databases etc. that system administrators need to be aware of for implementing and running the system; and

It is also recommended that developers share plans to develop software systems for administrative support. Communication seems important in this context and it is valuable to have a centralized perspective with a better view of all of the needs of graduate education. Developers and administrators should be aware of the efforts under way to develop software systems for administrative support. This would help avoid duplication of labor or "reinventing the wheels".

I look forward to receiving a response from your organization assuring the Davis Division that the duplication of system development between CBS and Graduate Studies has been recognized and is being managed to prevent waste of valuable campus human and financial resources.

Sincerely,



Robert Powell, Chair  
Davis Division of the Academic Senate  
Chair & Professor: Chemical Engineering & Materials Science  
Professor: Food Science & Technology