

March 14, 2011

JEFF BARRETTPPM 200-45 Review Coordinator
Informational and Educational Technology**Re: PPM 200-45 Review: I&R Faculty Tracking System (FacTrac)**

The Davis Division of the Academic Senate forwarded the subject document to all standing committees and the Faculty Executive Committee in each college and school. Comments were received from the Committees on Information Technology and Planning and Budget as well as the Faculty Executive Committees from College of Letters and Science, College of Biological Sciences and Graduate School of Management.

Overall the proposal failed to articulate a sound rationale for system creation. In the current financial situation, we really need to know what this will cost, how much it will save, or whether there are problems that truly need to be solved by funding and implementing this initiative. In theory, we agree with the many proposals reviewed in recent months describing the need for system centralization/standardization leading to administrative efficiencies. However, individual faculty and departments have special needs that must be met, and in some cases are comprised by centralization and standardization. We would have preferred to review the research into other systems in use at sister UC campuses explored by proposers during proposal development. Perhaps, it is not too late to begin researching other systems in use at UC; our campus would be better able to evaluate our vision for system functionality against processes already in place. We are concerned that this process has not been fully explored and documented in the past.

Estimation of ongoing maintenance cost was noticeably absent from the proposal. It describes current assignment of 1.5 programmers to this project for an unspecified time period. Presumably the system will require annual maintenance and periodic upgrade. The proposal does not describe which relational database software is being proposed for this project or whether the database software and related web applications would be easily upgradeable. It might be useful to explore whether there are any foreseeable problems in switching to a model which would seemingly rely on a constant web connection in order to create and access reports (as opposed to local file storage via Excel spreadsheets).

The proposal would have been much more convincing had it been able to present evidence of the new system's utility to a broader base of campus units. While there is support for the Budget and Institutional Analysis Unit's important role and contribution, we remain uncertain about the value and efficacy of this initiative beyond the unit proposing the system. The College of Letters and Science Faculty Executive Committee asserts that current databases tracking faculty FTE and research appear sufficient at present, at least for L&S use.

The Davis Division is acutely aware that department and college staff are already severely constrained, so it is essential to determine if the new system would be workload neutral for end-user offices at the least. Will implementation require more work, less work, or different work? What is the value-added impact of the system for those users not in Budget and Institutional Analysis? Is this the best time to implement another new administrative system? Will ongoing system activities presumed to result in considerable reorganization of administrative functions, render portions of the proposed system inefficient or obsolete? The proposal lacked sufficient details to make a reasonable assessment on these questions.

It is crucial that any new system work with multiple computer platforms including Mac, PC, and Linux. Finally, and most important, the creation of this system should never have a negative effect on the campus's educational missions, including teaching and research.

Sincerely,

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