Strategic Direction #7 – THESIS
Final Report

Strategic Direction 7: Centralize the System’s business/administrative functions, where appropriate, in order to leverage resources and increase effectiveness of service throughout the System.

Executive Summary

The THESIS project has been on a different timeline than most of the rest of the UMS Strategic Plan. An implementation plan, developed with assistance from Thundercloud Consulting, was presented to the Board of Trustees in May 2005. Since then we have undertaken the first stages of actual implementation with assistance from Cedar Crestone and funding from the Davis Foundation. An update was provided to the Board of Trustees in January 2006. Since that time, implementation teams have continued working on the main two facets of the project: 1) a shared processing center (initially for the processing of admissions applications; later to assume a range of other functions); 2) campus-level “one-stops” to provide a variety of integrated student services. We anticipate to “go live” with the Processing Center in Fall 2006. Some of the campus one-stops will also begin operation in the fall, with others phasing in as necessary changes to facilities are made. All facets of the THESIS project are being supported by parallel and complementary implementations of new enterprise software products, document management, and workforce management plans.

Final Recommendations Grid

(see attachment)

Note 1: Except for Recommendation 7.6, none of the reported items truly qualify any more as recommendations. They have been approved and are in the process of implementation.

Note 2: Given that the seven primary recommendations are all necessary parts of a single comprehensive project, it did not make sense to rank them in terms of priority or importance.

Assessment

There are four important pieces to the assessment of THESIS:

1) Processing Center: Is the business case adequate? Are the plans sufficiently complete for a fall 2006 go-live? These questions will be answered via an external evaluation by a consultant. That report will be reviewed in late May/early June, 2006, by the Sponsors, Steering Committee, and Presidents.
2) Processing Center: What is the quality of service provided to students and secondarily to guidance counselors and secondary schools? What is the quality of service provided to campus operations (e.g., admissions)? Are overall costs reduced? Methods for assessment and oversight are being developed by Center leadership along with process liaisons (initially from campus Admissions operations), with eventual review by the project Sponsors and Steering Committee.

3) Campus One-Stops: Is each campus ready for go-live? This will require assessments of facilities renovations, personnel preparation, technological tools, policies and procedures, etc.

4) Campus One-Stops: What is the quality of service provided to students? Most importantly, are they provided correct information along with timely problem solving? Is the need for referrals reduced? What is the level of student satisfaction? Secondarily, are there any budgetary savings? Each campus will develop appropriate methodologies for assessment.

Budget

(See the THESIS Business Case developed in February 2006)

Summary

The initial implementation planning for THESIS, undertaken in 2004-05, resulted in process maps for all the relevant student service areas. Processes were categorized as “above-the-line” (needing to remain on campuses) and “below-the-line” (back office processes that can reasonably be centralized). That analysis was endorsed by the Presidents and presented to the Trustees; it defines an eventual destination (although modifications are certainly possible, and some have already surfaced as potential recommendations from the Steering Committee).

The actual implementation of THESIS is proceeding in phases, with the initial launch of a Shared Processing Center (in Orono) and several Campus One-Stop Student Service Centers scheduled for fall 2006. Preparations for launch of the Processing Center are being guided by a Critical Path Checklist, with oversight by a Sponsors group and a Steering Committee that has representation from all seven campuses. An external consultant will evaluate go-live readiness. Based on that report, the Steering Committee and Sponsors will make a recommendation to the Chancellor and Presidents. A final decision is expected in June 2006.

The Center will initially focus on one area of responsibility—the processing of admissions applications and related materials. Loan collections and archiving/scanning will follow. The timetable for moving other “below the line” processes to the Center is flexible. Furthermore, coordinated or centralized operations will probably not in all cases require physical relocation of employees or their work to the Center itself.
The financial plan for THESIS specifies both start-up costs and estimated eventual cost avoidance. However, the calculation of savings is far from an exact science. This will have to be monitored. The savings will be greater on some campuses, less on others. Whether any savings are realized at all at the campus level will also depend on the methodology developed by the CFO’s and Chief Financial Officer for cost-sharing by the universities. The costs in the initial start-up year are being covered by the Central Office from reserves.

Overall THESIS planning has been fully integrated with Project Enterprise planning. The latter has involved developing new software tools and working to align processes and policies with those tools; the former has involved larger-scale business process redesign to improve overall service, create efficiencies, and remove costs. Both have been extremely labor intensive. With limited resources and in most cases no back-fill for the campuses, the projects have created enormous strain and many unmeasured costs. The gains are longer term and at present mostly unrealized, albeit promised.
## Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Human Resource Requirement</th>
<th>Financial Cost</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Complexity of Implementation</th>
<th>Leaders</th>
<th>Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 7.1 Complete work on identified differences in policies and procedures (standardizing wherever possible; maintaining differences wherever critical to mission differentiation) in order to proceed with timely PeopleSoft implementation and THESIS reorganization. | Low - Little employee investment (1-10 employees)  
Medium - Moderate employee investment (10-25 employees)  
High - Significant employee investment (More than 25 employees) | Low - Less than $250,000  
Medium - $250,000 to $1 million  
High - $1 million and above | Low - One time  
Medium - One time  
High - One time | Low - Staff empowered to make decisions  
Medium - Chancellor and multi-campus administration involvement  
High - Legislature, Board, Chancellor and Presidential involvement | Steering Committee, CAO's, CFO's | Medium |
| 7.2 Complete the planning for business process redesign, reconfigured job descriptions, training, facilities renovations, and assessment that will allow campus One-Stops to begin operating in fall 2006 (with the understanding that local circumstances may dictate only a partial emergence and gradual evolution in subsequent semesters at some universities). | High | Varies by campus | Low/Medium | Medium | Campus One-Stop Directors and Administrative Leadership | Medium |
| 7.3 Complete the business case and financial planning models for the Back Office Processing Center to provide needed context for ongoing UMS and university budget planning. | Medium/High | Low | Low | Medium | Steering Committee; Sponsors; Review by Presidents | Medium |
## Strategic Direction - 7

*THESIS*

Centralize the System’s business/administrative functions, where appropriate, in order to leverage resources and increase effectiveness of service throughout the System.

### Recommendations

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employee numbers, levels, expertise and time commitment required to implement recommendation</td>
<td>Amount of money required to implement recommendation</td>
<td>Length of time required to implement recommendation</td>
<td>Level and complexity of bureaucracy required to implement recommendation</td>
<td>Person(s) responsible to lead implementation of recommendation</td>
<td>Rank in order of importance</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Low</strong> - Little employee investment (1-10 employees)</td>
<td><strong>Low</strong> - Less than $250,000</td>
<td><strong>Low</strong> - 2007</td>
<td><strong>Low</strong> - Staff empowered to make decisions</td>
<td>Center Director, Steering Committee</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Medium</strong> - Moderate employee investment (10-25 employees)</td>
<td><strong>Medium</strong> - $250,000 to $1 million</td>
<td><strong>Medium</strong> - 2008-2011</td>
<td><strong>Medium</strong> - Chancellor and multi-campus administration involvement</td>
<td>UMS Staff; Steering Committee; Sponsors</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>High</strong> - Significant employee investment (More than 25 employees)</td>
<td><strong>High</strong> - $1 million and above</td>
<td><strong>High</strong> - 2012 and later</td>
<td><strong>High</strong> - Legislature, Board, Chancellor and Presidential involvement</td>
<td>Center Director; Steering Committee; Sponsors; Review by Presidents</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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| 7.4 Complete the design and implementation planning (including plans for oversight, accountability mechanisms, and assessment) for a first-generation Center, which will begin operation in fall 2006, and coordinate with implementation planning for document management, CRM, electronic payment, etc. | High | Medium | Low | Medium | Center Director, Steering Committee |
| 7.5 Coordinate One-Stop and Center planning with completion of a workforce management policy and plans. | High | Low | Low | Medium | UMS Staff; Steering Committee; Sponsors |
| 7.6 Develop potential scenarios and timelines for later stages of Center development. | High | Low | Low/Medium | Medium | Center Director; Steering Committee; Sponsors; Review by Presidents |
| 7.7 Develop powerful, user-friendly, web-based self-service options for students and advisors. | High (but mostly spent already) | Low/Medium | Medium | Project Enterprise Leadership; Steering Committee |

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