Questions and Concerns About the eUP Project

Below is a simple, unedited aggregation of overlapping questions and concerns about the eUP Project from different UP Diliman offices.

0. General Issues and Concerns

0.1. The eUP project is a three-year project that is expected to end. What will happen to the eUP structure and services? From which part of the Institution will the funding come from?

0.2. What are the modules that are included in the eUP system? HRIS? FMIS?

0.3. Will there be a module that will act as a replacement for the current registration system (CRS/System One)? If so, when will it be implemented?

0.4. Will there be a third party audit of the eUP system before, during and after the implementation. What will be the frequency of the audit when it is in production?

0.5. Who are the personnel involved in this project and what are their credentials/project handled that is similar to or as large as eUP?

1. Student Academic Information System (SAIS)

1. 1. In the survey form that was distributed after the scoping workshop for registrars held at the ITTC in May 2011, I suggested that an assessment be made with regards to what individual CUs have and perhaps build on it. May I know the result of this assessment by way of a comparative table showing the advantage and disadvantage of the proposed Oracle SAIS vis-à-vis the UPD CRS to better understand and appreciate the decision to proceed with SAIS?

Would it be possible to request a copy of the following documents for SAIS mentioned on pages 19 and 20 of the eUP ToR under Project Documentation of Deliverables of the Winning Bidder?

i. Review of Existing Systems, Processes, and Proposed Changes, if any

ii. Project Proposal

iii. Project Plan/Inception Report

iv. Implementation Plan

v. Systems Requirement Specifications (SRS)

vi. Migration Plan

vii. Testing Plan

viii. Training Plan

ix. Quality Assurance Plan

x. Risk Management Plan

1. 2. In the executive summary of the eUP terms of reference, it states "the University of the Philippines is seeking proposals from vendors/suppliers to provide products and services in connection with the information systems requirement of the University's eUP project". Can UP Diliman be considered a supplier specifically for the SAIS? A review of the ToR of eUP reveals that 6 (Admissions, Student information, Enrollment, Advising, Graduation, Billing) out of the 13 listed modules are actually up and running already in the present CRS of UPD and two are being targeted to be launched in 2013 (academic structure and transcript or records printing). The curriculum module is the next major module that is being worked on and is targeted to be launched in 2014. The SAIS gradebook assignment is actually present already in the UVLE tool used by faculty. For the record, although the CRS project started in the 1990s, the present version of the CRS that contains the mentioned modules was developed in 2009 and launched in 2010 by the team of Dr. Roel Ocampo, Asst. Prof. Kyl de Guzman, Ms. Via Lorenzo and their team of programmers.

It must be noted that the previous version could not support any more additional features unless a database design overhaul is made. Thus, the present maroon CRS was conceptualized, which was a rebuilding / rearchitecturing of everything from scratch with consideration for the simplification of module creation (i.e., even less skilled, less experienced student developers could contribute) by building a robust and relatively more secure framework that shielded the developers from much of the intricacies involved in getting a reliable and stable module up and running. A more significant aspect that was taken into consideration was the budget constraints. The present maroon CRS is homegrown and is a world class product made by UP graduates.

1.3. Will the third party integration include interoperability between the Oracle SAIS and the CRS? This is a mechanism to ensure continuous operation in case third party support fails. Also, a significant amount of work has been done already with regards to back-encoding data into the CRS.

1. 4. How secure will the SAIS be?

1. 5. What happens if there is a change of specifications or a request for new features / modules that were not defined in the ToR? Will these be absorbed by the winning bidders and not incur additional cost? If these would incur additional cost, what happens if the cost exceeds the budget for the eUP information systems? Would this cause the dropping or non-implementation of other possibly crucial features / modules?

1. 6. What happens if there are different operational procedures / policies being implemented by the different CUs? How will standardization be done if the "standardized" processes will violate existing policies of some CUs? Should the different CUs then agree to implement the strictest procedures / policies? Or, should eUP implement the least restrictive processes / policies but with support for customization for CUs who would need stricter controls?

1.7. After reading ToR, I saw that SAIS has good features that would make everyone happy (if implemented) but many of the features offered by SAIS are already being offered by the current UPD CRS,(to name a few: ineligibility tagging, reports generation, student records tracking,enlistment, LOA management, online COM, online DROPPING, SET answering, class submission, restriction management,etc) Having said that, is it really practical or is it really necessary to replace a working COMPUTERIZED REGISTRATION AND STUDENT RECORD system with a new system whose features are yet to be made and tested? Not to mention the amount involved in purchasing this new system that is being proposed? Where in fact, all the features being mentioned in the ToR, can likewise be offered by the current CRS system that UPD has (plus the fact that CRS is a proudly UPD with quality at par with any world-class system that you can buy in the market offering the same features).

1.8. When it comes to sustainability, what happens beyond 2017? Let us just say for the sake of argument, Oracle is no longer around. Say we already bought the system and then for the past years the system has been working quite well and then came issues like major updates on the system, or evolution of technology (people started changing operating systems and processors have evolved and can no longer support old softwares,etc) will Oracle's support be perpetual as well? Will they be there for us or will it mean new expenses on support? Are we going to buy a new system? I will cite an example, few years ago, the CRS team (credits to the team of Prof Kyl de Guzman) created Cashiering System that prints on dot matrix printers using an LPT port and installs on windows 98 and XP platforms. This system has been working quite well even until today but now, we needed to install this Cashiering System on a different platform like Windows Vista and 7 and prints on USB ports and laser jet printers for Windows XP are no longer sold and supported in the market and LPT ports are being phased out in the modern computer motherboards. Since we are the one (UP) developed this system locally, we can easily tap our developers who created the software to adjust to the changing world with a very minimal cost. We all know how fast technology evolves nowadays,these changes will inevitably come whether we expect it or not. Will Oracle be a system that will sustain us in years to come with the same minimal cost? Or do we need to buy new license/system that will cost us several millions again?

1.9. Why are we reverting to a proprietary system when we have, in fact, developed a working, in-house developed computerized registration and student records system? This seems to go against the grain of the University's thrust to adopt more open-sourced systems so that we will not be beholden to IT companies and the maintenance fees that they charge. Adopting this system will roll-back all our gains with regard to the use of open-source software.

The SAIS is an untested system and will set us back at least five years. Incidentally, by 2017, support is no longer guaranteed and we are on our own. I am scared to see that day.

2. Financial Management Information System (FMIS)

2.1. Query system ----with just click of a finger we expect to see informations

e.g.sino ang mga nabayaran, ano ang binayaran, kailan at paano nabayaran ang

isang empleado.

2.2. [Referring to the] "General Guidelines and Requirements" [of the TOR]

This portion contains only guidelines and policies pertaining to procurement. May we include in this portion the rules, regulations and policies pertaining to financial matters which would have an impact on the flow of online authorization and approval?

2.3. At the "Portal System/Employees Self-Service Section of the manual" under the HRIS,

" - The manual provides for:

Online Inquiry for Loan Transactions records and details and payroll information"

Questions:

a. Can an employee view/print the details of the deductions made on his/her payroll/DV?

b. Can an employee view/print the details of his/her Earnings Register? (Payroll and those paid through the Disbursement Voucher System)

c. Can an employee view/print the details of the incomes credited to his/her payroll bank account? (salaries, wages, benefits, reimbursements, etc.)

2.4. At the SAIS Module,

2.4. 1." 7 . Audit

a. The system should include a comprehensive audit trail functionality"

b. The system should provide a history of all online transactions especially the self-service environment.

8. Batch System

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Question: Will a similar module be prepared for FMIS for COA purposes?

2.4.2. "I " of the SAIS Graduation Module

"d. The system must be able to identify potential graduates with deficiencies."

Questions:

a. Will the system need approval from the Accounting Office/OSSS/OUR, Cash Office, etc. with regards to students with unsettled accountabilities?

2.4.3. "J" SAIS Billing

"1. The system should be able to calculate tuition based on students enrollment or other criteria(…)."

…..

"12. The system should be able to interface to financial details."

Questions:

a. Will the system be able to calculate the details of every entry in the form 5? Will the system be able to compute the following:

a.1 Tuition

a.2 Tuition fee increment

a.3 Foregone income

a.4 Details of discounts

a.5 Breakdown Miscellaneous I and II

a.6 Laboratory by subject

a.7 EDF

a.8 Entrance

a.9 Deposit

a.10 Student Classification (Graduate or Undergraduate)

a.11 Loan (loan board and soft loans)

a.12 20% college share in the TFI/RGEP?

Will the system be able to summarize these by college and by student classification? (Amount and number of students)

b. For those who opted to pay through banks, will the system be able to link it with the student's file and include in the computation of the above summaries?

2.5. FMIS System – General Guidelines and Requirements, Payroll System

Questions:

2.5.1. Will the system must be able to compute and automatically update the mandatory deductions (tax, SIC, Philhealth, PBig, Provident, etc.) in the payroll in the event that employee's earnings increased or decreased.

2.5.2. Will the system should be able to produce a database of the employees earnings and deductions from the payroll coming from both the monthly payroll and the special payroll, from the time the employee was hired (as permanent, lecturer, contractual, etc, status), until separation from UP either through retirement, resignation, death, transfer to other UP units, transfer to other agency, on secondment, on special details, etc. ("womb to tomb")

2.5.3. Will the system must be able to produce computer-generated yearly Earnings Register which includes earnings emanating from the monthly payroll/special payroll and from the Disbursement Voucher System.

2.5.4. Will the system be able to prompt the Accounting Office for:

a. Double claims for a particular services for a particular period.

b. Double RATA for a particular position?

2.6. "Payroll System

No. 36. The system should provide requested report for GSIS, Commission on Audit (COA), BIR, Pag-Ibig, Civil Service Commission (CSC), DBM, Ombudsman, etc."

Question: Will the remittance module be link to the Electronic Remittance Module of GSIS, e-Remittance of Pag-IBIG, and e-Remittance of Philhealth?

2.7. "Payroll System

No. 43. The system should have the ability to compute salary adjustments, either on a fixed amount or on percentage."

Question: Can the system automatically compute for the corresponding increase in the mandatory and other payroll deduction?

2.8. "Journals"

Question: Can the system produce a record of all the financial transactions (original entries)?

2.9. "Journals

"e. Journal batches should have batch totals. They must be balanced in the original source and base currency, and must be balanced to batch and journal control totals."

Question: Can the system provide for "Series Controls" for journal entries codes?

2.10. "Journals

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"h. The system should have the option to automatically route manual journal entries to the appropriate user for approval before posting. ------"

Question: Can cash transactions pass through the Vice-Chancellor for Administration for approval?

2.11. "Portal System/Employees Self-Service Section of the manual" under the HRIS,

- The manual provides for:

"Online Inquiry for Loan Transactions records and details and payroll information"

Questions:

a. Can an employee view/print the details of the deductions made on his/her payroll?

b. Can an employee view/print the details of his/her Earnings Register? (Payroll and those paid through the Disbursement Voucher System)

c. Can the employee view/print the details of the incomes credited to his/her payroll bank account? (salaries, wages, benefits, reimbursements, etc.)

2.12. Tax System

Employees Tax System

Questions:

2.12.1. Can the system be able to handle changes in the tax status of the employees (regular, UP-contractual, non-UP contractual, job order basis, etc) and automatically adjust the tax database and the tax rate?

2.12.2. Can the system be able to automatically update the tax base and tax rate up:

a.) Upon encoding of new earnings and correspondingly update tax rate on the monthly payroll and special payroll.

b.) Immediately when employee's status/dependents changes/increased/decreased (over 21 years old).

2.13. Can the system be able to handle data integration for employees whose names changed due to change in status and maintain a history thereof?

2.14. Will the system be able to produce reports required by BIR?

2.15. Suppliers/Creditors Tax System

2.15.1. The system must be able to build suppliers' database with data on payments made, VAT/EWAT deductions from the gross billing, period covered, date paid, TIN, Address, details of payment, etc.

2.15.2. The system must be able to produce tax reports based on the format required by BIR?

2.16. Bookkeeping

2.16.1. The system can make use of online authorization and submissions.

Question:

- Was there approval from COA for this online system?

2.16.2. "Inflow and Outflow of cash includes a) Cash Forecasting and b) Payment/Receipt Reconciliation – Bank Reconciliation "

Question:

- Will the module be able to produce periodic /quarterly/annual cash flow?

2.16.3. "Trust fund Management"

Question:

- Will the system be able to keep track of balances per line-item in the trust budget? Will it provide facility for downloading status of funds of the Trust Accounts?

2.17. Pre-Audit

2.17.1. "Purchasing of Goods and Services""

……

" u. The system should allow PO to be routed for approval. The approval will be based on approval hierarchy and approval limits."

Question: What about the supporting documentations like Abstract of Bids, etc.? Would they be scanned and attached to the online submission?

2.17.2. "Payment Management"

Questions:

2.17.2.1. The system was basically using on-line processing of payment. Will this not be subject to COA approval?

2.17.2.2. How would the system handle payment through the DBM and subsequently recording thereof.

2.17.3. "Corporate Asset Master"

Question: Will the system handle the historical data on expenses incurred on a particular asset?

2.18. "Asset Transactions"

"a. Asset records can be created from Accounts Payable when PO has been signed by the Accounting Director."

- PO is not subject to the signature of the Accounting Director.
- Asset can be recorded only upon receipt and payment of the Asset purchased.

3. Infrastructure

3.1. i hope that includes the necessary underground cable trenches that should connect the many new buildings that left them out originally as maybe, in some cases. this infrastructure is aside from "hardware and software" complements that we normally see around.

Some suggests the use of "wifi" routers instead of cables. According to Dr. Joel Mariciano, EEEI Director, "wifi or wireless fidelity routing, is much slower if many terminals located at the other end. this approach may not be suitable to connect large building clusters to the network."

i'd like to add, if e-up is supposedly "high speed" for massive data transfer, ie. electronic books & journals (the library is going to on-line stuff), maps, charts, images,pdf files, i.e. then we need perhaps optical cable support for this infra structure.

also, there are "lost packets", in cases of bad weather and there is are disconnections and "time outs" that happen within a day as the equipment gets older, some of them are in the order of 2 years.

servers too, bog down in about a similar period of use. these are operated on a 24/7 basis. Air conditioning may become essential for these sever hubs. The more terminals and peripherals may be added, the more electric energy will now be needed.

if many transactions occur like the stock exchange i.e., makati stock exchange, nikkei index, new york stock exchange, where there are minute to minute updates, then software offered by companies like oracle, might be the proper choice, which we should be able to sustain for license, management, & upgrades.

if our needs are not as "fire fighting", we can go for other alternatives. we can probably use mysql/php, which is a language used for data base management and i think is suitable for on-line applications. the people from computer science have more to say about this.

Whatever software we go for, will need development and adaptation to our university processes, which the software programers need to understand, and a whole new data base management training/structure in all of the units: computer literacy, proficiency, security, web site programing,...

does eUP imply the entire UP system, diliman and other UP campuses?

3.2. Will the entire PLDT network be peered with the Philippine Open Internet Exchange (PHOpenIX) or will it just be the racks/servers that will host the eUP service? How big is the bandwidth that will be committed by ePLDT for peering with PHOpenIX? What is the maximum latency we can expect from major telcos going to the eUP service?

3.3. What are the security precautions and controls in both infrastructure and software that are / will be in place for the eUP system?

3.4. Will the eUP infra be fully connected to the PhOpenIX? Does this mean that the entire PLDT network be connected to the IX?

3.5. Will they guarantee a minimum latency of 100ms rountrip time from all major telcos wired subscribers (dsl and lease lines only not 3g or anything wireless)

3.6. Who will be handling the infrastructure project from ePLDT and ITDC? Have they implemented a project as big as this? What are their credentials?

3.7. Will the hosting infrastructure be shared with other ePLDT clients?