Effort Reporting System
Technical Advisory Group
Notes of the January 18, 2005 Meeting
Accepted – 2/15/2005

Attendees: Jon Good (UCOP), Adam Cohen (UCOP), Wayne Kidd (UCOP), Terry Truax (UCOP), Don Rutherford (UCB), Lyle Kafader (UCSD), Judith Freed (UCLA), Mabel Lai (UCLA), Beatrice Cardona (UCSF), Ed Martinek (UCSF), Lumir Kovarcik (UCSF), Larry Johnson (UCD)

The meeting was conducted via conference call. Notes from the 12/7 meeting were reviewed and no changes were noted.

Project Status Update

Adam reported that design work is nearing completion and the development phase will commence shortly with the beginning of the programming work. The programming "workbench" has been defined and the tool set will be discussed with the TAG at a future meeting. Detailed specifications for ERS processing are being completed and a revised version of the user interface prototype was reviewed by the Requirements sub-group last week.

[Note: the project schedule has been revised and updated and is available on the home page of the project website: http://www.ucop.edu/sysdev1/ers/ers_docs.html.]

Questions from Requirements Group

The Requirements group reviewed a design for a payroll details web page that will display the information that goes into the calculation of the effort report. This page is designed to display the pay rate (salary or hourly rate) however several campus representatives raised concerns regarding display of this information.

TAG members were queried about methods for securing this sensitive data in use at campuses. Campuses reported using a combination of internal (application) and external security mechanisms to provide access control to this data.

The technical team will investigate developing an interface to external security systems for access controls to sensitive data, but will also provide an internal mechanism (application-specific) for restricting access to sensitive data.

A second issue that was brought forward from the Requirements group related to the addition of new data values to the corporate account/fund profile (CAFP) database. These values would help distinguish certain types of grants, specifically IPA's (inter-agency personnel agreements) and non-federal grants that require certification.

This issue led to discussion of the interface file formats.

Feedback on Interface File Design

Adam reported that the interface program for the PPS system PAR files has been written and is being used to create test data. This program will eventually be released as part of the PPS Base System.

Campuses raised several questions about the interface file formats. Beatrice asked whether we could access PPS data directly rather than downloading and copying much of the information. Jon responded that direct access had been considered earlier in the project but a replication approach was preferred for several reasons. These reasons include the issues with direct data access in a cross-platform environment and creating unexpected operational dependencies between the ERS and PPS systems.

For the financial system interface file, Lyle questioned whether a single effective date would be sufficient to determine the time period for which a particular fund record was applicable. Adam responded to this via the TAG issues list (item #4) after the meeting, providing a description of the processing logic that establishes effective dates for fund records. Although the interface record only has one effective date, the internal fund record has two dates, effective date and end date, which are set when the interface file is loaded. The effective date is loaded directly from the interface file, and the end date is recalculated by the system when a new effective date is found in the input.

Lyle mentioned that the proposed project ID (also known as agency number) for a project might change over the life of a project and therefore would not be a reliable key for this table. Lyle reported that SD has an internal project number which would be a better identifier to be used as the key for this table. The development team will discuss this issue with the Requirements group and will consider alternatives for how to associate projects with their component funds.

Further discussion pointed out the need for clarification of the rules for determining which funds are sponsored, which are federal funds, and which funds require certification. The development team will enhance the interface file specifications to provide additional guidance on how campuses can properly code the fund records on the financial systems interface file. The interface file specification will be reviewed again and finalized at the next TAG meeting.

New Interface for Users/E-mail Addresses

Adam reported that the development team had identified the need for an additional interface file to load ERS with user information. This file would combine authentication ID, employee ID and email address. ERS will lookup the signed-on user to retrieve employee ID for effort report creation and e-mail address for ERS notifications.

Several campuses reported that their external authentication systems can provide this information to the ERS application during the sign-on process. The ERS design already includes provision for interfacing with external (campus) authentication systems so for these campuses, this interface is optional.   For campuses that will rely on ERS internal sign-on features, this interface file must be provided so that authentication IDs can be matched to employee IDs for effort reporting.

Other Agenda Items

The agenda item for review of the data model and database design was skipped due to time constraints. This item will be carried forward to the next TAG meeting.

Next Meeting

The next ERS TAG meeting will be Tuesday February 15, 2005 from 2-4pm, and will be conducted via conference call. The ERS team will publish agenda and other materials via project website and will announce availability and confirm conference call details in advance of the meeting.