

Effort Reporting System User Group (ERSUG) Meeting Notes

Date/Location

November 7, 2007 from 8:30AM to 3:30PM
UCSD Eucalyptus Point Conference Center

Attendees

Ashley Clipson, Bronwen Halacy, Mojgan Amini, Karen Andrews, Nicholas Arent, Connie Brown, Glenda Freberg, Philip Godfrey, Ned Hamilton, Wendy Hom, Steven Hunter, Joy Long, Yvette Obando, Alma Palazzolo, Guy Stocks, Xuemei Wang, Steve Wilson, Barbara Vanden Borre, Jane Meyer, Rose Katsus, Monica Dunne, Adam Cohen, Connie Feeley, and Cher Herh.

Meeting Notes

Keynote Address: Dr. Arthur Ellis

Dr. Arthur Ellis joined UCSD as the Vice Chancellor of Research in September 2006. He came to UCSD from the National Science Foundation, where he served as Director for the Division of Chemistry, following a long career as a leading research scientist in the field of Chemistry. He brought a unique perspective to the User Group, bridging the gap between the need for federal requirements and the reality of the administrative burden on research faculty and staff. His focus was on the evolving nature of research into a highly global and interdisciplinary field, where allocating effort exclusively to a single project may be difficult, but is still very important. He suggested involving faculty on an advisory committee that reviews research compliance issues, including effort reporting.

Objective

The objective for the meeting was to identify strategies for accomplishing system adoption and provide a user forum to share best practices from a technical, departmental, and central office perspective.

Campus Updates

UC Los Angeles: Currently using version 7.4 for the Spring 07 quarter and are testing version 8.1 for the summer quarter. They want to make sure the multiple co-PI's functionality is completely operational before releasing, if possible. They have been sending notifications in the middle of the month and give 30-45 days to certify. They are not using automatic notifications. They believe that one-on-one training is better than online training for PIs. They are using their local DAC system for front end security. They would like to enhance the email notification that is sent when reports are reissued to group users by department. They plan to release one quarter at a time in the future. Spring 2006 (86%). Summer 2006 (84%). Fall 2007 (82%). Winter 2007 (71%).

UC Berkeley: Pilot training begins 11/8/2007 with five small departments with non-academic effort reports for the Jul-Sep quarter. They are testing using scripts provided by UC San Francisco and will hold three classroom training sessions that utilize UC San Francisco's online training and giving an opportunity for hands-on training. They plan to use central security administration with UCOP hosting. They will go live to campus in February. Their EMF Manager is communicating with certifiers at faculty meetings. They would like to increase the number of days before certifications are due. Online training will be required for administrative

users but not for certifiers. They assume many departments will not self-certify. Their biggest audit concerns are timeliness, education outreach efforts, and certifier understanding of effort.

UC San Francisco: Went live on 4/16/2007 with the full campus. They are in their fourth cycle and UCOP is hosting. Their administrative users can view all effort reports regardless of department. Training was mandatory for administrative users to access the system. They held computer labs after go-live and utilize a helpdesk that supports all central systems. They have a designated Effort Reporting Coordinator “ERC” in each department who serves as the communication bridge between the central office and administrative users. They strongly encourage their administrative users to review the reports and communicate with PIs. Their internal auditors have access to ERS. Fall 2006 (96%). Winter 2007 (93%). Spring 2007 (86%). Summer 2007 (opens week of 11/11/2007).

UC San Diego: Went live in June 2007 with six departments. They produce effort reports after two ledger closes and give departments 45 days to certify. UCOP hosts for them. They utilize a local helpdesk for ERS. They are rolling out in a phased approach to focus on training and pre-implementation process analysis. Winter 2007 (83%). Spring 2007 (deadline 11/21). Summer 2007 (released to campus in 12/07). Fall 2008 (released to campus in 3/08).

UC Santa Barbara: In preliminary phase of implementation. Plan to go-live sometime in 2008 and UCOP will host.

UC Riverside: Plan to begin testing in the first quarter of 2008. Have completed data mapping and testing of the extract files. UCOP is hosting and is building a test site. They will use a UC central authentication system for security and plan to go live in Fall 2008, if possible.

Training Strategies

- Written training aids work well for tech-savvy PIs.
- The question mark icon in ERS leads to Online Help, which is updated with new releases
- Quick “cheat sheets” have been useful at some campuses.
 - UCSF sent out laminated cards with tips on using ERS.
 - UCSD sent out 1 page 8-step how to certify job aids.
 - Many departments at UCLA created internal cheat sheets to be used locally.
- It is helpful to describe detailed scenarios using a Frequently Asked Questions webpage. Helpdesk feedback is a good place to identify typical scenarios.
- It is critical to update all changes, even if trivial, in the training manuals as the system is enhanced.
- Many UCSF encourages users to minimize the use of “multiple certifications required” to reduce confusion. They recommend only using this when the supervisor is not a PI and/or is unaware of how the employee is spending time on other research. This reinforces the concept that first hand knowledge is sufficient.
- It may be useful to create a local distribution list for Effort Reporting Coordinators to improve communications.
- The pre-packaged online training solutions may need to be modified locally to accommodate local terminology, shorter/fewer modules, and updates as the system is enhanced.

Certification Policies

The system was built assuming that users will self-certify. In practice, campuses are finding that, more often than not, the PI will certify for his/her employees. There was a suggestion to expand the MyProjects search to include the PI's own effort report, regardless of funding source.

The current ERS White Paper and UC Policy requirement to certify effort within 30 days of producing the effort reports was discussed. In particular, the issue of how soon is it both practical and desirable to produce effort reports after the close of the last payroll cycle for a given effort reporting period was considered. Many people seemed to feel that the currently-mandated schedule is too short because it doesn't allow enough time for ledger production, ledger review, payroll expense transfer entry, approval of the expense transfer, and having the expense transfer hit the ledger in time to be included in the effort report. The User Group determined a critical need to ensure that effort reports are produced from accurate payroll data, including payroll expense transfers, and plans to draft a proposal to extend this requirement to the Management Group for reconsideration.

The User Group also discussed how much time should be allowed for effort certification once the effort reports are produced. A recommendation will be brought to the Management Group to consider rewording the policy to allow individual campuses to set deadlines that range from 30-45 days after production of the effort reports.

UCSF defines "Academics" as employees with an academic status in the payroll system and any employee in the MSP series.

There was discussion regarding the origin of the requirement at UCSD and UCLA that "academics must be certified by an academic".

Topics in Compliance

It is encouraged that as campuses discover effective ways of capturing certifications within the timeframe that they share the ideas with the ERS User Group distribution list.

Cost Sharing Integration

UCLA: Manually enters cost sharing into ERS.

UCSD: Certifies cost sharing via their local Cost Sharing System and captures the cost shared effort below the line in ERS.

UCB: Building a system to feed in cost share data. The issue that may cause confusion is the time interval difference between the cost sharing commitment timeframe and the effort reporting timeframe.

System Update and Enhancements

The norm is that campuses test the new updates in QA before implementing in Production, and hold off on updating until off-cycle unless the fixes are urgent. Campuses are beginning to consider best practices for formally managing enhancement requests and submitting to Bugzilla.

Critical Success Factors – Departmental Perspective

- Frequent contact with faculty
- Consequences must be backed by upper management
- Ample planning/Prep time

Critical Success Factors – Technical Perspective

- Local login to campus systems
- Security (authentication and permissions)
- Business users need to test the FSIF extraction

Critical Success Factors – Central Services Perspective

- Training is the most important factor to secure adoption
- Communication
- Support from upper management

ERS User Group Email Distribution List

To facilitate communication on a go-forward basis, a UC ERS User Group distribution list has been established. To join the list serve, send an email to listserv@ucop.edu with a blank subject line and the following text in the body of the email indicating your own first and last name, “Subscribe ERS-USERS-L firstname lastname”. Send emails to the distribution list by inserting the following into your address line: ERS-USERS-L@LISTSERV.UCOP.EDU.

Plans for Another ERSUG Meeting

- Talk about go-forward with maintenance, including archiving
- Invite a speaker from the management group
- Keep the mix of user types (departmental, technical, central office)