

“Outwit, Outplay, Outlast: Surviving a Student Database Implementation Process”

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SURVIVAL TIPS for WAR

- Always look for a “Best Practice” model. A best practice is what results when qualitative comparisons are made between similar colleges. Is another college with the same system performing a particular activity/task efficiently (e.g. add codes, drop for non-payment, part of term, web grades, etc.)?
- Executive management (i.e. Vice-Presidents) should remain actively involved throughout the implementation process. They need to know the difficulty of the task, the workload issues, need for overtime funds, and understand the impact implementation has on staff morale. “Culture Shock” is inevitable...but the college leaders can soften the transition by calming the troops.
- ERP software implementation responsibilities should be shared between the information technology department and the functional areas where the software is being implemented. Effective channels for dialogue, testing and problem solving are critical.
- A Project Manager should be assigned full-time to the implementation. The task is more than a full-time job!
- The implementation project team composition should represent ALL functional areas from the college. If you are from a multi-college district, send functional staff from all sites. “We’re all in it together!”
- Project team members’ regular position/responsibilities should be reassigned to other employees for the project duration. (i.e. Registrar 50% - project team member 50% does not work!). Use temporary promotions and backfilling. Train “replacement players” before the implementation is started. Teach a teamwork philosophy at the outset of the project.
- Make “Cheat sheets” and use screen shots with simple text/instructions. Date and save the “cheat sheets” for future reference and updates. Set-up a FAQ for faculty and staff to reference before calling the “help desk.”
- Encourage networking and campus visits to other colleges with your system. Cloning and copying an interface/ procedure is often simpler than trying to figure it out yourselves. User group conferences are very helpful and very task related. “We’re all in it together.”

- Consider changing the way you do business before trying to change the software (i.e. changing an administrative procedure may be a lot cheaper than modifying (if possible) the software. Don't compromise academic integrity in the process. An enterprise system can be modified (though costly) to meet your needs.
- Outside consultants (though expensive) can make you life a lot easier. Make sure they work side by side with your functional users. It is a lot more effective and direct results are more immediately attainable.
- Use your sick leave, personal necessity, and vacation days wisely. Remember, mental health days are permitted and should be mandatory. "We're all in it together" and "It's only a job!"
- Don't BASH the software (it has no feelings and does not bleed or bruise) or the people who bought it (they meant well)...IT ONLY DESTROYS MORALE!