The project team continues to make steady progress on the General Ledger (GL) data conversion and validation, though a number of items still need to be addressed such as lien balances. As we have stated previously, the complexity of the data conversion is impacting the availability of resources needed to work on subsequent phases of the project such as System Integration Testing. To mitigate this impact, the GL team is splitting up the conversion and testing preparation tasks among themselves, and we are hiring additional resources to assist us. We are also still working to finalize the approach for the Data Warehouse Accounts Payable interfaces. Our next major milestone is to begin System Integration Testing on November 12.

-Jessie Masek, FSIP Project Manager

**Q & A WITH ERIC SONQUIST**

**DIRECTOR OF INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION**

What’s your role in the Financial System Implementation Project (FSIP)?

I took an active role beginning with the Fit/Gap Analysis sessions that began in October 2012 and then continued as a Business Process Team Lead coordinating weekly meetings and the twice-a-week working sessions the technical teams have. My focus has been to support the A/P, G/L and Budget Control areas.

The project timeline was recently extended five months. Is the project in trouble?

No the project is not in trouble. When the campus began this project, they set an initial date for the first phase so that it would be completed prior to the beginning of the UCPATH implementation. I think this was a very aggressive timeframe and could only have been achieved had we already had the full team in place. The reality is that we were starting from scratch to build the PMO team and hire the implementation staff. We have also discovered more significant complexities than originally anticipated. We are now focused on a more manageable (though still aggressive) target date of March 31, 2014 for the completion of Phase I. Frankly, I am more concerned that we get it right than I am with insisting on a fixed start date.

There’s a lot of change going on. What is your advice to departmental business officers?

There is a lot of change going on. Luckily, the Program Management Office website provides regular updates on the different projects. This is also true for the UCPATH site that UCOP has up and for the Gateway home page. Finally, the Student Affairs SIST office has great information on the modernization project that they are embarking on. I hope all of our staff are checking these websites to keep up with what is going on.

What rumors have you heard about the projects that are true?

One rumor is that the Automated Timekeeping System project has not been implemented by the full campus due to operating constraints within the software. That is true, and we are awaiting the release of Kronos V.7 to see if these issues have been addressed. Another rumor that is true is that as we have moved forward with the implementation of FSIP, we have discovered many more interfaces to existing systems that must be addressed – and this is a part of why we have extended the implementation timeline for FSIP.

What rumors have you heard about the projects that are false?

The most rumors seem to be around UCPATH. The project is a highly complex Payroll and Human Resources Management System and it has run into challenges as they have worked to adapt this product to the various UC campus environments. I have heard folks say that it was not going to be implemented. To my knowledge, this is simply not true. The reality is we are running an old payroll system that will be replaced and the likely scenario is that UCPATH will be implemented on a different timeline than originally planned.

New systems are expensive and time-consuming. Why is a new financial system worth it?

Probably the best example of why this investment is worth it happened this past year when the Office of the President mandated that we move to bi-weekly pay. What we found is that the old financial system was not constructed to create and reverse the payroll accruals that are caused by a payroll structure that varied from how benefits accrue (vacation, sick leave, etc.). We were running this same core system in 1981 when I first began working at UCSB, and we have been very lucky that the technical staff supporting the system have brought us this far without a total system collapse.

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