ASSESSMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL READINESS REPORT FOR

UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI

PRESENTED TO:
SIS Replacement Project Leadership:
Executive Sponsors, Steering Committee and Project Team

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this assessment is to provide an independent evaluation of the ability of the University of Cincinnati to plan and execute a student system replacement project.

METHOD

During the months of January through March 2013, Collegiate Project Services (CPS) conducted an assessment of the readiness of the University of Cincinnati for its SIS replacement project. CPS conducted 44 one-on-one interviews, reviewed 155 responses from an on-line questionnaire, and conducted critical issues and risk analysis sessions to gather the input for this report.

SELECTED FINDINGS

Listed below are selected findings from the assessment.

1. Stakeholders identified strengths of the university that will facilitate the implementation of this project. The most prominent strengths identified were the willingness to change, an experienced and dedicated staff, management support, and strong executive support for the project.

2. Stakeholders have specific concerns and fears about the project. A variety of concerns were expressed, but those mentioned most frequently were loss of current functionality, possible excessive costs, staffing overload issues, and concerns regarding how long and how realistic the project schedule will be.

3. Stakeholders perceive solid benefits of a new system. Stakeholders believe that the new software system will provide increased “usability,” new functionality, increased efficiency, easier access to data, and will provide a modern, robust system with a single central database.

4. Effort Awareness and staffing strategy awareness are low across the university community. The general university community is not aware of the effort that will be required for the project, and in general have limited ideas for strategies that can address project staffing challenges.

5. Key areas have been identified that will need significant work to prepare for the implementation of the project. These areas include the development of staffing plans for each of the student offices as well as staffing needs in the IT department.

SELECTED RECOMMENDATIONS

Listed below are some selected recommendations to address gaps in the readiness assessment results. These recommendations are expressed below in abbreviated form only. The full set of recommendations and details of the recommendations are contained in the body of the report.
Selected recommendations regarding technical readiness gaps

1. Acquire a full time contract applications developer for the duration of the implementation
2. Develop a preliminary project staffing plan for technical resources
3. Identify a technical project manager for the implementation
4. Declare a moratorium on non-regulatory legacy enhancements during the implementation

Selected recommendations regarding functional staffing gaps for the implementation

5. Fill all open functional positions prior to the start of the implementation project
6. Develop a project staffing plan for each administrative office affected by the implementation
7. Provide and communicate a budget for backfill support of the implementation

Selected recommendations regarding project readiness gaps

8. Begin to address the action steps from the project risk mitigation plan
9. Prior to implementation hire a professional, independent project manager with higher education ERP experience in the selected student software
10. Assign and train one or more part-time project schedulers for the implementation team

Selected recommendations regarding cultural, leadership, and communication issues

11. Prior to the implementation provide team leader development experiences for process team leaders
12. Develop and begin implementing a project communication plan to raise awareness, understanding, and realistic expectations about the project
13. Charter an Organization Change Management Committee (OCM) to plan, direct, and implement organization change management strategies that will be needed for a more successful system replacement project. Hire a part-time OCM consultant to help guide this committee

A selected recommendations regarding resource and effort awareness

14. Develop and execute a plan to communicate realistic expectations concerning the resources and effort it will take to carry out this project.
CONCLUSION

We believe that UC will have a successful system replacement implementation if the most critical gaps identified in this report are addressed. It is extremely imperative that UC considers seriously the recommendations regarding the technical readiness gaps, and the need to develop staffing strategies for each of the student administration offices.