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Welcome

WELCOME to the first issue of Financial Operations & Systems News. Our aim is to give you the opportunity to learn about what’s new in our sphere, particularly the exciting improvements we have in store for financial processes University-wide.

Complexity reduction. It’s a term you’ll be hearing a lot in the coming months as Financial Operations & Systems propels forward to provide simpler and more consistent processes that complement the diversity of University activities.

Over the next few years, our goal is to be the provider of choice, buoyed by the provision of consistent systems and processes, and to deliver a world-class staff and student experience.

In this issue we take a look at some projects at the forefront of complexity reduction. Turn to page 6 to read about how the Procure-to-Pay solution is providing integration and flexibility and boosting procurement efficiency. Have a look on page 7 to discover how improvements to Spendvision will make the coding process, overseas travel, and cash claims a lot simpler.

We hope that you enjoy the first issue of Financial Operations & Systems News, and we look forward to working with all our faculty partners and PSU customers to roll out our new initiatives and make life a little easier for everyone.

Mark Preston
Director
Financial Operations & Systems

Contributors

Thanks to: Mark Preston, Krishan Prasad, Chris Galpin, and Anu Ananda

Words: Monica Higgins and Kathryn Harvey
Layout and graphics: Monica Higgins
The department of Financial Operations & Systems (FOS) is all about creating efficiency, reducing complexity, and facilitating the smooth running of the University’s financial operations through shared services.

The University is extremely fragmented – over 100 schools means over 100 sources of revenue. Inevitably, even the simplest processes are done in a variety of different ways, and on top of that, many activities are unnecessarily time-consuming. For example, approving a $5 transaction can take the same amount of time and effort as approving a $5,000 transaction. Amazingly, in some systems, 40% of transactions are worth only 3% of value. This not only wastes money on processing but also takes up the time of senior staff.

Shared services takes care of a variety of financial operations from a centralised location, with the end result of increasing the efficiency and cost effectiveness of the University’s financial activities through streamlining all processes and reducing the number of disparate transactions.

Like leading organisations across the world, we are consolidating transactional activities to achieve consistency of processes and leveraging our world-class technology to do so.

“We are consolidating transactional activities to achieve consistency of processes and leveraging our world-class technology.”

Our activities go beyond processing transactions to proactively providing strategic business capabilities to the University’s faculties and units. Our core team provides ongoing support, professional development, and training to finance staff currently working in decentralised locations within the University’s campuses.

We provide functional support for systems and training for the thousands of Hyperion, Spendvision and PeopleSoft users within the University. FOS has a strong customer focus and is always able to assist with inquiries regarding our systems.

We have demonstrated our commitment to the University with Service Level Agreements which outline our responsibilities to the faculties and PSUs and what they can confidently expect of us.

In saving staff time and effort, and by implementing world-class systems in faculties and units, we are a valuable asset to the University. We are well on track for realising the potential of systems such as Spendvision which are among the biggest and best in the world, and are working towards harnessing that potential for the benefit of The University of Sydney.

More about FOS on page 3.

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**FOS in focus:**

**A valuable University asset**

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**Sick of carrying all that cash overseas?**

**Corporate Card PINs now available!**

Email pcardhelp@finance.usyd.edu.au to find out how to get a PIN, or turn to page 7 for more information.
FOS in focus:

Our Achievements

2006:
- Increased operating efficiencies and vendor relations with key suppliers.
- Expanded the student intern program in a relationship with the faculty of Economics and Business.
- Began implementation of a Shared Services project.

2007:
- Improved reporting and systems functionality: operations team undertook development, testing and integration of reporting systems and multi-business entities.
- Procure-to-Pay (P2P) processes were tested and systems enhancements developed, and a "special handling" website for hazardous goods was published. Asset tag solution was introduced to streamline production and distribution.
- Billing-to-Cash (B2C) developed fully integrated billing and receipting modules, and made progress in centralising transactions and streamlining workflows.
- Shared Services implemented in faculty clusters for Health, Science, Engineering, IT, Architecture and Arts.
- Decreased incidence of errors and rejected payments: Analyses of vendor data files within PeopleSoft and Spendvision and reviews of vendor bank details carried out by Trade Payables.

2008:
- Improved workflows and processes: Reduced credit card transactions in Pharmacology by 55%.
- Achieved a 44% increase in processing volume.
- Expect additional transactional processing volume increase of 45% with further planned rationalisation of billers.
- B2C improved web payment capability.
- Consistent processes for faculty-based Shared Services staff.

2009 and Beyond

By December 2009, we will have:
- Implemented P2P in all major procurement locations
- Majorly reduced number of billers
- Established central credit and collection
- Managed all assets on PeopleSoft
- Improved Spendvision functionality
- Implemented a Master Data concept
- Upgraded People Tools 8.49

By 2011, we will:
- Be provider of choice for University customers
- Deliver a world-class student experience
- Have consistent systems and processes
- Possess optimal automation and self-service
- Provide accurate and reliable information
- Enhance the University economic model
- Be a talented, skilled and engaged team

Our goals revolve around the following pathways:

Rationalise and invest in systems. 
Own the end-to-end process. 
Provide single source of truth. 
Deliver customer-centric reporting. 
Stakeholder buy-in and engagement. 
Proactive advice provider. 
Performance monitoring and improvement. 
Build team capability and culture.
Training in focus:

Changing the face of training

To coincide with the improvements to our financial processes, the Financial Operations & Systems Training Unit has had a face lift.

The Training, Communications and Functional Support team provides training, and functional and systems support for key systems such as PeopleSoft, Hyperion, and Spendvision as well as managing financial systems access.

In addition to our regularly scheduled classroom training and eLearning, we now offer tailored training to specifically meet your needs.

Your feedback has highlighted that staff using our systems often have specialised questions which are not generally covered in the basic classroom training.

In the customised training, we cover a range of topics:

- PeopleSoft Financials
- Purchasing
- Billing and Accounts Receivable
- Use of Chartfields – class codes, Project codes etc
- Hyperion Reports
- Planning and Forecasting
- Hyperion Academic Reports
- Spendvision
- Travel
- Plus more

If you’d like your staff to experience a customised training or Q&A session, contact Krishan Prasad who’ll work with you to deliver a quality learning experience. Call 935 16000 or email kprasad@finance.usyd.edu.au

Who’s who?

As the manager of the Training, Communication & Support team, Krishan brings his solid experience to the table to deliver new scope and direction in the training arena.

With a background in education, Anu Ananda knows how to make learning an enjoyable experience and welcomes your questions and ideas.

Having worked in the financial system support area as a functional analyst for many years, Luc Bhoyroo is an experienced and valuable resource. He has in depth knowledge of all PeopleSoft modules and their interaction with sub systems used across the University. As team leader of the financial system support team, Luc’s focus is on the provision of timely service and support for financial systems user community.
IN her 26 years working at The University of Sydney, Silvana Hourcade has seen a lot of changes.

“To start off with, when I began, there were no computers. I was really pleased to have an electric typewriter!” One change that she agrees is for the better is the rollout of eProcurement, part of the Procure-to-Pay (P2P) solution recently evaluated in Silvana’s department of Pharmacology, where her role as Purchasing Manager sees her provide administrative and financial advice.

A major drawcard of the new system is that it eliminates the need for unnecessary Spendvision data entry. Previously, all transactions had to be coded and allocated an account number, requiring a tax invoice which would regularly go missing.

“A major drawcard of the new system is that it eliminates the need for unnecessary Spendvision data entry.”

This meant staff often spent time requesting new invoices from suppliers. Transactions needed to be approved, monthly statements printed, and all invoices filed - making it a time-consuming and often inconsistent process. Silvana agrees that P2P has simplified things.

For one thing, it monitors pricing, which in turn improves relationships with suppliers. E-catalogues give users up-to-date pricing at a glance, far removed from when staff would need to ring suppliers and check prices product-by-product, not knowing which items were discounted, and generally in a pricing shambles.

The new ‘punch-out’ feature allows purchasers to pick what they need from e-catalogues. This has eliminated many pricing and freight issues, and created a faster ordering process. The positive attitude towards eProcurement is reflected amongst suppliers. While there are still suppliers yet to be converted to the system, most are happy with the idea and are making the transition.

“Suppliers are starting to realise that they have to move with the trend or else get left behind.”

Silvana is pivotal to the rollout of eProcurement, and is one of the stars of the project. She was part of the pilot and has become a champion of the cause, as staff from other faculties look to her for advice and expertise to smoothly implement the system.

Continues on page 6.

People profile:

Champion of the cause

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Continues on page 6.

P2P champion, Silvana Hourcade
THE purpose of the Procure-to-Pay (P2P) project is to implement a University-wide solution that is integrated, flexible, and efficient.

Supported by the Peoplesoft Financials V8.9 eProcurement module, this solution will make P2P transactions quicker whilst still capturing critical procurement data. This will allow the University to leverage its buying power while minimising processing and procurement costs.

Features include centralised purchasing, better spend transparency, improved receipting process, strengthened relationships with suppliers, and a reduction of the purchasing function by academics. Notably, there is now no need for Spendvision data entry, other than for travel and entertainment. This effectively saves between one and five days of work effort per week.

The P2P solution was first deployed three months ago within the discipline of Pharmacology, overseen by Silvana Hourcade. The rollout has been a success, with key P2P processes, Peoplesoft technology and people-based challenges, such as supplier negotiations, progressing well.

“There has been no negative impact on research staff in this department, and it doesn’t waste any of the academics’ time,” says Hourcade. “There are fewer pricing and freight issues, and ordering can be done faster.”

Purchasing transactions have been speedily processed, primarily through the Peoplesoft eProcurement system, and have had no adverse impact on customer service or goods delivery. It also heralds a change in the way transactions are made, with 80 per cent of all purchasing now being done via Peoplesoft eProcurement rather than corporate credit cards.

The Pharmacology P2P solution deployment officially wraps up at the end of October and will be handed over as ‘business-as-usual’ practice. Work has already begun on the next P2P Solution deployment at the School of Molecular and Microbial Biosciences and the School of Chemistry.

Champion of the cause (continued from page 3)

“I’m quite happy to show other people how to do it. In this department it has had no negative impact on research staff, which was my aim. Other departments will probably have to face challenges but what we’ve seen here is that it has worked smoothly.”

Silvana’s input was included in the system’s design, and she provides feedback to the project team. “My suggestions are taken into consideration and I’m thrilled to see that the University hasn’t gone ahead and implemented a totally new system. I felt that this was a collaborative process, and definitely not steamrolled.”

She says the most challenging aspect of her job is to learn and implement new systems – “especially at my age.” She also says it’s not always easy to convince academic staff to take on new systems.

However, Silvana is always open to new possibilities and is a chameleon, easily adapting to new changes and becoming the master of her trade.

“You need to accept that things change, and make the best of it.”
Cash Claims

IN October, the University’s cash claims system underwent some major changes whereby all claims will now be processed through Spendvision.

The previous system was less than ideal. Three systems coexisted for when staff required reimbursements after using personal funds for work-related expenses: Spendvision which was online, Accounts Payable which was paper-based, and Petty Cash.

Not only was this time consuming and labour-intensive, but it often lead to duplicated processes and was therefore costly.

To rectify this situation, a new system was recently implemented that requires all claims for travel and non-travel expenses to be redirected to Spendvision only. The only exception is non-travellers without Spendvision accounts, who can still be reimbursed through Petty Cash for amounts under $25, but must go through Spendvision for greater amounts.

This swaps the old manual, lengthy process for a direct-deposit system where reimbursements will be included in the employee’s next pay.

Auto Coding

THE Spendvision Auto-Coding Project aims to simplify the coding processes within Spendvision, saving time and labour.

The previous coding process required all transactions to be manually coded and approved monthly, irrespective of the amount. This meant that small value transactions that accounted for 40% of volume – but a mere 3% of value – needed to be manually coded and approved.

Following a successful trial and positive feedback in October 2008, we have gone ‘live’ with auto-coding Spendvision transactions below $82.50 (incl. GST) to various class codes based on merchant classes or categories from NAB. The Responsibility Centre (RC) will be coded by the system to the user’s default RC, and users will need only to code their projects, or change the class, RC and project codes if they wish. As usual users will need to provide details for travel and entertainment transactions that are subject to FBT.

The second phase of the Auto-Coding project; ‘NO APPROVAL’ for transactions under $82.50 (incl. GST) was also implemented in October. This means that transactions under $82.50 with coding complete will NOT require approval in Spendvision. This effectively frees up time, labour, and eliminates duplicate processes.

The third phase of the project involves auto-coding for amounts greater than $82.50 and will be launched early next year.

For further information on this project please contact Krishan Prasad – Manager, Training, Communication and Support. Phone: 93514629, email: kprasad@finance.usyd.edu.au

Corporate Card PIN

INTERNATIONAL travel can prove difficult for staff at The University of Sydney as many countries require a Personal Identification Number (PIN) for credit cards, meaning that staff cannot always rely on their Corporate Cards when overseas.

Consequently, staff are often using their own money for University expenses, which is an inconvenience and a burden, necessitating lengthy claims processes upon their return.

To eliminate this problem, staff can now apply for a PIN for their Corporate card from the Spendvision team. This will strengthen the existing Corporate Card system by adding convenience and security.

In the Corporate Card PIN Quick Win Initiative, launched in October 2008, PINs to Corporate Card applicants will be issued by NAB.

The Spendvision team will process applications and duly notify users when their PIN is ready to be collected from the Cashier’s Office, or for regional centres, from a nominated person, as arranged by the Spendvision team.

If you’re a traveller and require a PIN on your Corporate Card, email pcardhelp@finance.usyd.edu.au with the following details:

01. Surname 02. Given name 03. Name as it appears on your card 04. Last six digits on your card
Photos:

Strategic Plan 2008-2011 communication session

Off-site planning day

Melbourne Cup lunch