

To: President Gamble Business Process Review Oversight Committee	From: BPR Accounting Functions Team LeAnn Anderson, Heather Halverson, Keith Pickering, Kevin Ward, Sheron McIlhattan, Christina Fournier, Chris Wendland, Ed Binkley, Duane Morris
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Financial Reporting

Executive Summary

The purpose of this process was to investigate the needs present on all campuses for a financial reporting tool. Through our focus groups, surveys of other universities that use Banner and discussions with the Financial Reporting Team here on campus, it was determined that there was a very real need for a product that can deliver easily customizable financial reports. Furthermore, it was determined that the best case was to implement a report writing software that would allow our users, at the departmental level, to create their own reports.

Through the work of the team and with the assistance of ITC and various other people on campus, we were able to identify the specific features we wanted the software to have. David Court was tasked with researching the available products and comparing the features each product has to our list of requirements and then also getting price ranges for the software.

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A. Introduction

1. Business Case Subject

Financial Reports.

a. The Action

Determine the need for and feasibility of a financial report writing tool.

b. Business Objectives

To achieve a cost and time savings by utilizing a financial report writing tool that can be easily utilized by Banner financial users across all four campuses making critical financial information available to Banner finance users in a way that is quicker to assemble and easier to customize.

c. Scope of This Case

Through the use of focus groups, surveys and discussions with knowledgeable IT personnel, determine the features our client base requires and then determine if our current system can supply these needs or if an expanded report writing tool is necessary.

2. Business Case Purpose

This business case will assist with making a decision regarding not only the feasibility of purchasing a report writing tool, but will also help determine the overlaying need across all four campuses for access to information that is currently hard to collect, cumbersome to manipulate and not easily understood in its current forms.

3. Background

Currently, there are only static, managed pre-delivered reports with no drill down capability, no "Ad Hoc" capability and a substantial lead time for the creation of any new reports.

The Accounting Functions team began by conducting a focus group with about 30 participants from all campuses. Initially, we were not considering the need for new software, but rather, what our clients needed in the way of financial reports, the manner in which they are created and the ease and flexibility with which they can be modified.

During this process we realized that our current software was not just inadequate for today's needs, but grossly inadequate for our needs in the future. The members of our focus group were very passionate about what they viewed as being a wholly inadequate report writing capability.

Their complaints included the following:

- long development time, due to the backlog of requests
- the inability of the current reports to be modified so as to meet the variety of needs of different departments
- the demand of our clients to be able to create "Ad Hoc" reports, which may be used only once but would take much longer to create manually.

From our focus group we developed a list of features that a report writing tool would need to possess in order to meet our needs.

We surveyed approximately 150 campuses to help us determine what others are doing to address their report writing needs. Of the approximately 30 responses we received to our survey, we found the following reporting models:

- Centrally produced static reports.
- Departmental created Access reports with no central administration.
- Commercial reporting tools usually are too complex for the departmental users due to the need for the user to be proficient in the use of SQL.

Using this information from the focus groups and our survey of the other Universities, we developed a final list of features. This list was provided to David Court who researched the various report writing tools available, their costs and any other pertinent features that might be of interest to us, such as becoming an SCT/Banner partner. This matrix of information is attached to this report.

a. Problems and/or Opportunities Addressed by Case Subject

Information is King!! But the ability to easily access, manipulate and use that information is not always easily accomplished due to a number of factors, such as costs, unwieldy report writing software, lack of personnel and inability to easily access and manipulate the data which can be caused by inflexible software or the software's inability to communicate with or access other programs and data stores.

When we held our focus group for our Financial Reporting it quickly became evident that our client base had many more needs, as far as financial reports are concerned, then we currently possess the capability to timely provide. This helped us determine that a more powerful and flexible reporting tool was needed.

To assist the departmental level of user, centrally created "views" can be easily provided removing the requirement for end users to know SQL.

As there are many different levels of accounting ability and software knowledge here on campus, we also realized that developing a "Best Practices" for financial reports and a way to disseminate that information was equally crucial to our task.

b. Other Important Historical or Situational Information

Since the introduction of SCT Banner here on campus our need for access to Banner data has grown exponentially each year. The Banner Finance Reports have been our main and only "official" source of financial reports. The backlog of reports that have been requested by campus users keeps growing due to the constraints of the software and the lack of support staff necessary to keep up with the growing demand for reports.

B. Methods and Assumptions

1. Financial Metrics

- a. Please see appendix "A".

2. Business Case Scope and Boundaries

- a. This business case covers all four of the campuses.

3. The Analysis Period

- a. The analysis period was based on Fiscal Year 2006 figures.

4. Geography or Location

- a. All four campuses are involved in this analysis.

5. Organizations

- a. The Financial Report writing team Financial Services, or the equivalent office, is included on each campus.

6. Technology

- a. The Accounting Functions Team is recommending that the University explore the report writing options that are currently being evaluated.

7. Scenario Design

- a. This business case compares the current static, managed pre-delivered financial reports to the needs of our customer base, which is synthesized into a "wish list". That wish list is then compared to the features of various software products, as researched and analyzed by David Court. The needs are essentially the same across all four campuses.

8. The Cost Model

- a. Please see appendix "B".

9. The Benefits Rationale

The benefits will be:

- More efficient production of custom financial reports
- Maintain consistency across all campuses
- More efficient dissemination of data
- Improved control over funds in University indexes

Assumptions

The Following Assumptions were made:

- The capabilities of our current report writing software and staff are already working at maximum capacity and providing reports that have the highest level of functionality.
- The need for better, more flexible "Ad Hoc" type financial reports will only increase, as will the importance of being able to provide those reports.

- Implementing an “Ad Hoc” report writing tool will not only enhance the abilities of our administrative staff, but will also save time as the reports will do quickly and automatically what they now must do manually.

C. Business Impacts

1. Non-financial and Non-quantified results

The increase and ease with which information can be retrieved, manipulated and formatted to provide a meaningful analysis tool.

D. Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Conclusions

The BPR objective of time savings and increased functionality can be achieved through our recommendations.

2. Recommendations

The Accounting Functions team recommends the Oversight Committee put this reengineered process forward for adoption across all four campuses.