



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY OPTIONS

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Submitted by:

Administrative Information Systems

**Northeastern Illinois University
5500 N St Louis Ave
Chicago, IL 60625**

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PURPOSE STATEMENT

Northeastern Illinois University is exploring information technology options and the future direction of our Administrative Information Systems (AIS). To date, the University has identified four broad options (replace, expand, enhance, and contract) that are explained later in this document. This Request for Information (RFI) is developed to solicit information and counsel on the future direction of AIS at the University and is not intended to solicit specific branded vendor solutions. Participation by market leaders in providing AIS is encouraged. The goal is to determine if one of the identified options best fits the University needs.

INTRODUCTION

The University

Northeastern Illinois University is a fully accredited, comprehensive (Carnegie Classification Master's I) state university of 11,000 commuter students located on a 67-acre campus in a residential neighborhood on the northwest side of Chicago. Along with quality academic programming consistent with the University's mission of excellence and access, the University is known for support of the fine arts, global education opportunities for students, a strong track record in external grant funding, and leadership in teacher preparation and education.

In addition, the University has outreach centers in the metropolitan area: The Center for Inner City Studies addresses educational needs in the Bronzeville area on the south side of Chicago, El Centro provides educational opportunities in the Hispanic community on the northwest side of Chicago, and the Chicago Teachers' Center is actively engaged in Chicago public school reform. The University is an active participant in the Multi-University consortium campus in the northern suburbs.

The Students

Northeastern is nationally recognized as having the most ethnically diverse student body in the Midwest. 44% of our students are under the age of 22. Another 30% are 23 to 29 and about 26% are over the age of 30. Students from 49 countries attended classes in Spring of 2001. 44% of our undergraduate students are White, 27% Hispanic, 14% Asian and 13% Black.

The Employees

Northeastern employs approximately 346 full-time and 229 part-time faculty that are supported by 586 staff. All are committed to excellence in teaching. The faculties varied academic backgrounds and professional accomplishments provide students with many learning opportunities.

The Operating Budget

Northeastern Illinois University has an operating budget of approximately \$100 million and this would provide the funding base for an enhancement of administrative information system technology.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The Administrative Information Systems are comprised of four major components: Student Information System, Human Resources & Payroll, Academic Courseware and the Business Information System. Interfaces have been written to integrate the data within three of the four distinct systems. These interfaces are run on a daily basis and function within acceptable, but limited, parameters. The Academic Courseware system is not interfaced to any other system at this time.

Student Information System (SIS)

Currently the University utilizes the CARS Jenzabar application. This application includes the admissions, registration, financial aid and student billing modules. The application resides on a Hewlett Packard N4000 server, running UNIX as an operating system under an Informix database license. The SIS is currently not web enabled. The system uses a touchtone registration system (EPOS) allowing students to register and confirm registrations via touchtone telephones. However, it does not offer the functionality to pay via credit card using the touchtone system. The University has been using this SIS application for approximately 8 years. It has been heavily customized but is kept current on releases provided under a software maintenance agreement with the vendor. The Student Information Systems supports 175 concurrent users. The database is approximately 150 gigabytes in size and processes thousands of transactions per day.

Human Resource & Payroll

At this time the University contracts with ADP and uses the Enterprise Human Resource and Payroll application that is fully web enabled. It resides on DELL PowerEdge Servers, operating under Windows 2000 and uses the Oracle 8i database. ReportSmith functions as a user based reporting tool and produces a majority of the University's Human Resource and Payroll reports. This application has been in use for approximately three years and just recently went through a major upgrade that included the web enablement component. It has a handful of customizations included within its architecture. While all data entry and payroll setup is performed on campus, the payroll data is transmitted to ADP for actual payroll run, check production, wage garnishment processing, tax reporting to state and federal governments, and year-end processing. The Enterprise system supports 40 users across 10 departments. The database is approximately 30 gigabytes in size.

Business Information System (BIS)

SCT FRS Plus 2000 provides the financial application and it resides on a mainframe. The University leases CPU time and space from a provider. The application uses VSAM file structure and runs on a CICS platform. Focus is used as a reporting and data extraction tool to enhance user access to the data. The University has used this application for approximately 23 years. The current application is not customized and is a current release.

Academic Courseware

Blackboard version 5.5.1, provides the instructional support at the classroom level. The University contracts with Blackboard and runs a hosted product in Virginia. The system allows the student to access course materials and assessments via the web. The University currently has one third of its faculty utilizing the software to enhance face-to-face courses. Approximately 3000 students are engaged in over 300 Blackboard courses during the fall, 2002 semester. The URL for the University server is <http://neiu.blackboard.com>.

OPTIONS/CHOICES

Over the past several years, the University has considered several different alternatives to expand the administrative information systems. The University is now poised to fully explore these options.

Replace

The first option under consideration is to replace all administrative information systems with a new fully integrated administrative computing system. This option envisions a full enterprise product with a core database and full web enablement providing a seamless environment to students, faculty and staff.

Expand

The second option considered is to expand only one of the administrative systems with new modules from a vendor that has a current relationship with the University. This option envisions a comprehensive dynamic integration thus creating a more robust administrative system.

Enhance

The third option identified is to keep the existing administrative information systems and incorporate a comprehensive web enabled layer to enable students, staff and faculty access to all administrative systems via the web. This option envisions the development of value added software engineering that enhances the systems with e-commerce capacities and portal style customized user views.

Contracted Service

The fourth option seeks out a third party capable of providing the University with a fully integrated administrative information system and also the computing capacity to successfully support the University on an on-going basis. In addition, this organization, preferably, but not limited to a university, would have the capability to expand and completely maintain administrative information services.

REQUEST

The University seeks information and counsel on the above-identified alternatives. The responses to this request will assist the University in assessing the University's long-term future administrative computing and technology initiatives. Responses should address technology issues, of today and the future, and what direction (option) your firm believes that the University should consider when developing its next step, the creation of a Request for Proposal. Your deliverable should include support for the option that you believe is in the University's best interest to pursue including why this option would provide a long term solution for administrative information systems, information management, classroom content management and workflow integration including full consideration of a business content management system supported by document imaging to replace the University's dependency on stored paper. The University will use this requested information as a critical component prior to implementation of one of the options.

It must be stressed that this request is not a solicitation for vendor specific solutions. To meet the intent of the request your response must provide the University with information regarding why we should choose one of the options over another.

RESPONSE DUE

All information must be submitted to the Purchasing Department no later than March 17th, 2003. The deliverables must include an electronic copy that can be accessed via a password protected web site hosted by the vendor. In addition, vendors can also submit one printed copy.

The submission address is:

Purchasing Department
Bernard Office Building
Northeastern Illinois University
5500 N St Louis Ave
Chicago, IL 60625-4699

ON-SITE PRESENTATION

All responders will be considered for an on-site half-day visit to present their option for consideration by a group of University stakeholders.

TIME-LINE

Dependent on funding conditions the University intends to move from this RFI step to a Request for Proposal step within the next 270 days after determination of the option.

UNIVERSITY CONTACTS

All contact with the University regarding this RFI must be initiated through one of the below named individuals. If you require additional information, clarification, or specific statistics to provide the request input, please contact either:

Statistical and Information Aspects

Jean Potillo, Director of Administrative Information Systems

Email J-Potillo@neiu.edu

Procurement Aspects

Robert Filipp, Director of Purchasing

Email R-Filipp@neiu.edu

University Coordination

David Jonaitis, Associate Vice President for Financial and Administrative Affairs

Email D-Jonaitis@neiu.edu

There is a website devoted to the development and support of this RFI. Please refer to http://neon.neiu.edu/~itoption/neiu_ito/.