Our student information system (SIS) underpins student services on all Tufts campuses and affects almost every aspect of student life at Tufts.

Rebuilding our SIS Infrastructure

The student information system (SIS) we use today is outmoded. Current SIS challenges us to manage student data and support academic policy changes. Its antiquated functionality frustrates students and limits our ability to provide modern, technological solutions. Because SIS affects almost every aspect of student life at Tufts – from admissions to graduation – implementing a new SIS infrastructure will enhance our ability to support students and faculty, and collaborate on interdepartmental or cross-school programs.

The mission of the SIS Project is to provide Tufts University with an efficient and effective student information system that supports the university’s mission, integrates with existing systems, and adapts to growth and change. At every step of the implementation process, we are focused on the needs of students and faculty at Tufts.

Who is building new SIS?

Our team includes student services leaders and technology experts from all Tufts schools, University Information Technology (UIT), and Central Administration, many of whom left their home office to co-locate at SISville and give 100% to the project. To design the system of tomorrow, our core team sought input from over 100 subject matter experts at Tufts who helped us identify and examine how we work today. We have also been supported by staff on Tufts’ ten student services teams who have worked hard to provide high-quality support to our students and faculty.

Where we are today

Having spent the last eight months learning Oracle-PeopleSoft Campus Solutions, the SIS Project team deduced where and how the new technical infrastructure could work for Tufts and integrate with existing systems. We developed a long list of benefits that we look forward to sharing with you.

In March 2012, we began a new project phase that focuses on configuration, development, and implementation. Through the end of the project, our technical developers will work closely with Tufts’ registrars, bursars, and other student services representatives to ensure proper implementation – examining individual processes (e.g., changing a name, viewing a bill), larger functional areas (e.g., records, student financials), and eventually the whole system. Meanwhile, our training and documentation team will prepare materials, customized to schools and audiences, to teach Tufts how to use the new student information system.

When will we see the new SIS?

We will have several rollouts over the course of the 2012/13 academic year. During this time, student services personnel will need to participate in testing and training.

The Tufts community will move to the new SIS in the 2013/14 academic year, beginning with new students who apply for admission this fall.

This is an exciting time for Tufts. Rebuilding SIS positions the university for academic and technical innovations in the coming years.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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<tr>
<th>Event Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Course Catalog</td>
<td>Creates a record of all Tufts courses in new SIS.</td>
<td>Testing begins May 2012</td>
<td>Goes live in July 2012</td>
<td>Student Records Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Admissions Interfaces</td>
<td>Connects Tufts’ admissions systems to new SIS in time to record fall 2013 matriculates.</td>
<td>Testing begins June 2012</td>
<td>Goes live in Sept 2012</td>
<td>Admission Staff</td>
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<td>Financial Aid (FA) Interfaces</td>
<td>Connects Tufts’ FA system to new SIS in time to process FA for fall 2013 new matriculates.</td>
<td>Testing begins Aug 2012</td>
<td>Goes live in Dec 2012</td>
<td>Financial Aid Staff</td>
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Building New SIS: One Step at a Time

To accurately rebuild SIS, we need to design a system that reflects Tufts' current academic landscape. Though this article focuses on one topic – course enrollment – the SIS Project team has identified nearly 150 unique processes that deserve the same level of review.

Since July 2011, the SIS Project team has assembled many times to examine, review and design course enrollment in the new, PeopleSoft-based system. Our process begins with documenting how we manage course enrollment today and then iterates through multiple reviews of each school’s enrollment process, factoring in billing, financial aid, advising, and more. This review lasts weeks, sometimes months, depending on the complexity of the topic.

Though there are some similarities, course enrollment is not the same at every Tufts school.

At the veterinary, dental and medical schools, many students take courses in lock-step, moving through the curriculum in groups that complement clinical learning. As a result, many of these students are enrolled by their registrars.

At other Tufts schools, students use SIS Online, though not in the same way, for course enrollment and add/drop. For example, undergraduates are assigned registration times and many need advisor approval before enrolling, while graduate students at Sackler do not need advisor approval to register for a course.

Currently, and for as long as we can remember, each Tufts school has separately managed course enrollment. The SIS Project creates an opportunity for our registrars, bursars, and local experts in advising, admissions, student financials, and IT to learn from each other and share best practices. As a result of this collaboration, some registrars have adopted processes and policies from other Tufts schools that we think will benefit students, simplify cross-registration, and more.

While we develop our understanding of course enrollment from a student services perspective, we also need to examine how course enrollment will work in PeopleSoft. Over the last few months, we have identified many ways for the new SIS to help us do our jobs better and improve the student experience. For example, during course enrollment the new SIS will check whether students have already taken a course (or its equivalent) and if so, block that action. This small task should help students choose courses and save administrators time. Where privacy, financial, or advising rules exist, policies are coded into the system so that they perform seamlessly and appropriately manage course enrollment.

In partnership, the SIS Project team designs what course enrollment will be in PeopleSoft, which will be modestly customized for each school. Once we finalize course enrollment requirements, we will deliver them to the SIS Project’s development team.

To do this important work, it helps to be at SISville where we can leverage our strengths, get quick answers to questions that may be difficult to compose, and bridge the distance between the Boston, Grafton, and Medford campuses. Having chosen all the right people for this project, their collaboration is a hallmark of the SIS Project.