

# Decision Support News

Winter Quarter 2008

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- Upcoming conversion to the EDW, Oracle, and Business Objects 6.5
- IPEDS 101
- NRC Update
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- Senate Finance Committee Inquiry
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- Don't forget:: just type "DecisionSupport" in your browser to reach our website.

### NEW VALID PTA

#### TABLE IN DSS

DSS would like to announce an enhancement to the OF Valid PTA universe. The OF Valid PTA universe now includes information on all PTAs, including PTAs that are now closed. Users can access this universe to find out all current and past valid PTAs in their org.

The universe is called OF\_Valid\_PTAs. You can use award, project, or task owning org, owner, or manager to look up valid PTAs. We hope you find this expansion useful.

## March Close Signals DSS Conversion to EDW

DSS is embarking on a 3-part upgrade, scheduled to occur on April 14. The 3 upgrades are:

1. A new Oracle database to replace the old Sybase database
2. Conversion from use of the "old STAR" to the EDW-based Oracle Financials data
3. An upgrade of Business Objects to Version 6.5

Much of this conversion is "behind the scenes" and has no effect on DSS users. However, there are several important items that DSS users need to know and do for this conversion to be successful, so please read on for information on the conversions.

### Schedule

DSS will be available to users in the current environment through April 11. On **Monday, April 14**, DSS will disable access to the cur-

rent environment and users will need to begin using the new environment. Unlike the usual month-end close, there will be no DSS downtime, although March close data will be available one day later than our usual month end schedule.

"There are several important items that DSS users need to know and do for this conversion to be successful"

### Accessing the new Business Objects environment

On Monday, April 14, you will no longer be able to access the current DSS Business Objects environment. Instead, you will need to download the new version of Business Objects. It is a relatively simple process and will take you approximately 15 minutes. On Friday night, April 11, we will post instructions on how to install the new version on our website. The instructions will be posted here (you'll need to enter your SUNet ID and password):

[https://www.stanford.edu/dept/presprovost/dss/bus\\_obj/index.shtml](https://www.stanford.edu/dept/presprovost/dss/bus_obj/index.shtml)

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## Update on the NRC Assessment

We reported in the last DSS newsletter that the NRC Assessment of Research-Doctorate Programs, including a survey database and an interpretive essay, was scheduled to be released in late spring/early summer 2008. Last week, the NRC announced that the report and database will not be issued until late September 2008, soon after the start of the 2008-09 academic year here at Stanford.

Neither a preview of the web interface, nor of how data will be presented, has been made available. We will receive information about which variables are used in the ratings and how

they are weighted about one or two months before the release. The actual rankings for each program will not be known until at most one day in advance of the report's release.

The NRC delay is due, in part, to extensive data checking and validation. It is critical that the data be credible, or the whole exercise (two years and counting, for Stanford) will be called into question. So most schools are willing to put up with more delays if it means the eventual product will be credible and provide valuable information.

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# Senate Finance Committee Inquiry

On January 24, the Senate Finance Committee wrote to the 136 US colleges and universities with endowments of \$500 million or more, asking a series of questions about endowment growth and management, and spending on student aid. Senators Max Baucus and Chuck Grassley, the leaders of the Committee, were seeking information to supplement the NACUBO report on double-digit endowment growth.

The letter reads, in part, “It seems clear from recent actions by our nation’s top universities that there is much that can be accomplished by colleges and universities, particularly those with significant endowments, to control costs and provide real relief for students from low and middle income families. In fact, many colleges and universities are now focused on controlling rising tuition costs and assisting low and middle income families. This is a very positive trend that we’d like to see continue....We would appreciate additional information about tuition costs and your institution’s endowment. University endowments receive very generous tax breaks under the Internal Revenue Code. We want to better understand how these tax benefits for higher education endowment are improving education and making undergraduate studies more

affordable for low and middle income families today.”

The letter goes on to list 11 multi-part questions, with a reply requested within 30 days. Here at Stanford, a group was formed to prepare a response to the questions. The group included staff from the CFO’s office, Public Affairs, DSS, Office of the General Counsel, and Admissions and Financial Aid. The questions cover enrollment, tuition, financial aid policy and amounts, endowment management and policy, endowment payout, and endowment restrictions.

The Stanford response to the inquiry is a 22-page document of tables, graphs, and text explanations of the policies and data. Although it was a significant amount of work, it is an excellent summary of these aspects of Stanford’s endowment and financial aid policies. It highlights the tremendous improvements Stanford has made in financial aid in the past ten years, and the recent success of the endowment. It can serve as an excellent reference document should you ever need this type of information. The document is online here:

[http://ucomm.stanford.edu/news/senate\\_response.html](http://ucomm.stanford.edu/news/senate_response.html).

## Institutional Research Tools Spotlight: IPEDS

IPEDS is the Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System. IPEDS is the core postsecondary education data collection program for NCES, the National Center for Education Statistics, an arm of the Department of Education. Most institutions of higher education are required to submit data to IPEDS. The only exclusions are those not open to the general public, such as military training sites.

Data are collected from all primary providers of postsecondary education in the country in the following areas: enrollments, program completions (i.e., degrees granted), graduation rates, faculty counts and salaries, staff counts, finances, institutional prices, and student financial aid. These data are submitted via the IPEDS website, and made available on the same website to students, researchers and others.

The Higher Education Act of 1992 mandated the completion of IPEDS surveys in a timely and accurate manner for all institutions that participate, or are applicants for participation, in any federal student financial assistance program. In 2000-01, the IPEDS program was completely redesigned and the data collection was converted from a paper-based to a fully web-based system.



Because IPEDS collects so many different kinds of information, it requires the cooperative efforts of several groups across campus to complete all of the pieces. DSS is the “keyholder” for IPEDS and retains primary responsibility for the completion of IPEDS in an accurate and timely manner. The other offices involved, and their data responsibilities, are:

Registrar—degrees, enrollment, institutional characteristics, graduation rates

Financial Aid—student financial aid

Controller’s Office—Finances

HR—staff headcounts

DSS—faculty headcounts and salaries

If you are in need of comparative data in these areas, DSS can help you by either teaching you how to use the IEPDS data retrieval tools, or by getting the data for you. We can also advise you on whether or not IPEDS is the right source for the information you are seeking.

## DSS Conversions, cont'd

*(Continued from page 1)*

We are posting the instructions on Friday (4/11) to avoid problems we've had in the past with users installing the new version ahead of the scheduled conversion, and then being unable to access data via Business Objects. If you have a special need to install the new version early, let us know.

If you try to use the *old* Business Objects on Monday, April 14 or after, you will see a dialog box telling you that there has been an error returned by the Zero Admin Business Objects Server (ZABO). (If you click the "Details" button in this dialog box, it will tell you that you are not authorized to use WebIntelligence.)

A little friendly advice: If you are a sporadic DSS user, don't put off downloading the new version until you have a need for DSS data. You might forget about the upgrade, and be quite puzzled when you receive that message in, say, June.

### *Changes to Oracle Financials data in DSS*

While the conversion from the old STAR to the EDW is mostly transparent, there will be a few differences. The biggest change is that the current "OF Revenues" universe will be enhanced, and renamed. After conversion, it will be called "OF GL Data". This new name reflects the fact that the new universe has **all** GL data, not just revenues. That means you can get assets, liabilities, rolled up expenses, and balance data (more on balances in an upcoming newsletter) from the OF GL Data universe. So, if you want only revenues, you will need to specify that in your report.

Other universes will be enhanced with new data, in particular, new award attributes have been added. Take a look at the award attributes folder in the data provider screen to see the new items.

### *Information for Brio Users*

If you are one of the few Brio users that accesses DSS's Oracle Financials tables directly, please call us to go through what you need to do to continue to use those tables. We can walk you through the process.

### *What to do if you have a problem*

Please don't hesitate to call Anita or Kathy if you have any questions or problems. Contact information is on page 4 of this newsletter.

One important thing to note is that the EDW Oracle Financials data is structured differently than it was in the old STAR. Because of that, DSS staff have been trying out various reports to test how fast a query runs. While we have made adjustments to ensure reports run quickly, we can't anticipate every ad hoc report a user will want to run. So please bear with us as we continue to tune the new data to achieve the best performance that is possible given the structure and volume of the data. As always, if you have a report that seems to run forever, give us a call and we'll troubleshoot it with you.

DSS will be sending an email to all DSS users early in the week of April 7 with detailed instruction, so please read that email and keep it for future reference.

## WASC Accreditation Update

Work continues on the WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) Accreditation project. WASC is the regional entity responsible for accreditation of schools in Hawaii, California, Guam, and the Pacific Basin. (If you want to know more, visit their website here: <http://www.wascsenior.org/wasc/>)

Once a Steering Committee and Executive Committee were formed, the first step in this newly-updated process is to submit an institutional proposal. This proposal sets the institutional context, describes the "themes" that will guide Stanford's accreditation effort, outlines the projects and approach that Stanford will take for its two onsite visits, provides a detailed work-plan for accreditation, and includes institutional data in a proposal index. The proposal has been through a couple of drafts, with most of the work being done by Brad Osgood, Judy Goldstein, and Stephanie Kalfayan. The proposal is due on May 8, so at that time the proposal will be made public. It will be posted on Stanford's accreditation website, which is here: <https://wasc.stanford.edu/>. (or just type "wasc" in your browser window)

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**Personnel Note**

DSS is looking for someone to fill a 6-month fixed term position as an IR analyst. This person would be filling in for Missy Damon while she is on maternity leave, starting approximately July 1. If you know someone with data mining skills, excel skills, and (ideally), knowledge of higher education, please have him or her contact Rana. Thanks!



Here is our new home, Building 60. We're on the second floor, at the end closest to Memorial Church (the left side as you face the building). Have you visited us yet?

**WASC Accreditation Update**

*(Continued from page 3)*

Once the proposal is reviewed and accepted (hopefully) by WASC, the campus at large will start to become more involved in the effort. Accreditation is no longer an requirement that can be satisfied by one person writing a lengthy report. These days, accreditation is a long-term commitment to quality assessment and improvement. Stanford is required to assess all of its degree programs, and ensure that the data collection activities feed back into decisions about curriculum, requirements, and budget.

After the proposal phase, work will begin on the first of two site visits by WASC, called the Capacity and Preparatory Review (C&PR) scheduled for Spring of 2010. The second site visit is called the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER), and will place in the Fall of 2011. Extensive data and written reports are due before both of these visits.

DSS has been involved in the process for about a year, with Rana attending Steering Committee meetings and small group meetings about data collection and survey research. This involvement will no doubt continue and intensify for the next 4 years as the process continues. Feel free to contact Rana if you want to know more.

**NRC Survey Preparation**

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The NRC hopes that the data made available on its website will benefit prospective graduate students by giving them comparable and reliable data about the programs they are considering. Students (and departments) should be aware, however, that the data will not be "nuanced", that is, it will not reveal subtle differences in programs across universities, such as sub-specialties. This data cannot take the place of thorough research by the student and responsible information dissemination by departments.

Another reason for the delay is the complexity of the ratings process. It involves two regression analyses, and the integration of these two analyses into a final method for determining a program's rating. This particular methodology has not been used before, so the NRC is doing extra research to ensure credibility.

DSS is working with VPGE to distribute to programs the "key" data identified by the NRC as feeding the ratings. We have a preliminary idea of what data will be used, but are waiting until we have confirmation before distributing the "NRC Data Sheets" to each program.