

Happy Holidays!

# The Score

Volume 3 • Number 9

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The monthly review of the Oberlin Project for Unified Systems for the staff and faculty of Oberlin College

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## upcoming events

**Dec. 13-16, 1999**  
Student Records  
functional training

**Dec. 20-23, 1999**  
Student Records  
functional training

**March 19-22, 2000**  
SCT Summit 2000,  
San Francisco, CA

## feature

# State of the OPUS: What's in store for 2000

The Oberlin Project for Unified Systems has been a part of College life for almost three years now, and things show no sign of slowing down. Even though three out of four modules are now officially "live," the work associated with the conversion will continue through the year 2000. There are a number of major projects due to take place next year that will involve new versions of BANNER, more "live" processes, and some auxiliary systems. Here's a preview:

### BANNER upgrades: a whole new world

The biggest change that will take place late next year will be the upgrade to BANNER 4.0. This upgrade represents a major change to the software, and as such, will take a fairly long time to

implement. The upgrade will be installed first in one of the "test" versions of the BANNER database so that users can test the new version to get a feel for how processes work in 4.0.

But even before users can get their hands on the new version, the techies need to wrangle with it first. BANNER 4.0 means a vast amount of work behind the scenes, since a new server arrangement will need to be implemented for the new version to run on the Macintosh platform. The new server software, developed by a company called Citrix, works by compressing the data on the server and then decompressing data on your desktop. Non-techie translation: Citrix will allow BANNER to behave the same on any platform. Because a Citrix implementation represents such a major piece of work for the techie-types, decisions still have to be made about when the server will "go live." Look for more news about Citrix over the summer of 2000.

In the meantime, there are smaller upgrades, called "point releases," that will occur between now and the 4.0 upgrade. For example, the 3.2.3 version of BANNER Student Records will go into production in February using a new technical setup called Web Tailor, which completely changes the way the PRESTO system runs behind the scenes. The changes will be relatively transparent to users, but the techie-types will have a good deal of work to do on this upgrade to implement the changes.

### new processes in Student Records and Financial Aid

When we reported a year ago that the Student Records module was "huge and complex," we

*In the next year, several new features will go live on BANNER, such as students' ability to see their grades via PRESTO, the BANNER web interface. At left is a sample screen of a student's grades as viewed on the web.*

SCT WWW Information System											
Display Grades											
<i>Info</i> The following are your grades for the term requested.											
Student Information											
Term:	Fall 1999			Level:	Undergraduate						
Degree:	Bachelor of Arts										
Major:	History			Academic Standing:							
Course Work											
CRN	Subject	Crse	Sec	Campus	Title	Grade	Credit Hours	Earned Hours	GPA Hours	Quality Points	
10012	ARTS	100	1	Main	The Visual Arts	C	4.00	4.00	4.00	8.00	
10037	HIST	151	5	Main	World Civilizations	B	3.00	3.00	3.00	9.00	
10017	COMP	110	4	Main	Computer Applications	C	2.00	2.00	2.00	4.00	
10029	MATH	120	3	Main	College Algebra	B	3.00	3.00	3.00	9.00	
10006	FREN	100	2	Main	Elementary French	A	3.00	3.00	3.00	15.00	
							<b>Credit Hours</b>	<b>Earned Hours</b>	<b>GPA Hours</b>	<b>Quality Points</b>	
							Current:	15.00	15.00	15.00	2.80
							Transfer:	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
							<b>Overall:</b>	15.00	15.00	15.00	2.80

*continued on page 2...*

## ...feature

...continued from page 1

meant it! Nine months after officially going live during the April 1999 registration, the SR module continues to have mini-production cutovers whenever a new function is incorporated into day-to-day procedures. One of the new functions scheduled to go live in 2000 is the entry of students' grades into BANNER, which will allow students to then view their grades over the web using the PRESTO system. In addition to displaying grades on the web for the first time, the Registrar's Office will also be processing graduation in BANNER for the first time in May of 2000. And of course, there will be dozens of Admissions processes happening for the first time in 2000, as the College and Conservatory Offices of Admissions select the Class of 2004—the first class to be admitted using BANNER.

And last, but certainly not least, there's Financial Aid. After two delays, one due to scheduling and one due to staffing issues, the Financial Aid module is finally gearing up for its implementation. In many ways, however, the staff in the Office of Financial Aid already has one foot in BANNER-land; almost everyone in the office already uses BANNER in one way or another to view current student data in the Student Records module, and there are several short-term solutions in the works to make sure that the current Admissions info (in BANNER) is fed into the legacy Financial Aid system (still on the VAX). Once the 2000-01 admissions cycle is over, the Financial Aid staff will begin their functional training with Steve Bellin, the SCT consultant for Financial Aid, and in the winter of 2000-01, Financial Aid will join the rest of the campus on Planet BANNER. When that happens,

*When the Financial Aid module of BANNER goes live in 2001, the old VAX system will be unplugged for good—the end of an era!*

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### auxiliary systems on the move

Outside of BANNER, there's work being done with several of the auxiliary systems around campus. In Residential Life, for example, Sandy Hougland in Housing and Dining will be using CBORD, her new system, to assign rooms and match first-year roommates for the first time in the spring and summer of 2000. Even though CBORD went live in July of 1999, the timing of the conversion meant that all assignments were done in the legacy system and then fed into CBORD. Beginning in the spring, however, everything will be set up in CBORD directly. A number of processes have already been designed to allow CBORD and BANNER to talk to each other.

This is critical, since Housing and Dining, the Student Accounts Office, and the Registrar's Office all need information from each other to stay up-to-date on current student information.

And other auxiliary systems are in progress as well, such as the current search to find a new computerized key system for the campus, to be implemented in 2000. In addition, the Computer Store in the CIT is now training to implement a new point-of-sale and inventory system called POSIM.

All in all, the year 2000 is shaping up to be a busy one for OPUS. That is, if Y2K doesn't get us all first (just kidding!). ■

## opus notes

### Thank-you lunch for team leaders

A luncheon was held on November 22, 1999, to thank the team leaders of the system conversions that have taken place since July 1, 1999. These systems include two sub-modules of BANNER: the Admissions conversion, led by Maryann Stillwell and Michael Manderen, and the Student Accounts conversion, led by David Laczko and Todd Rasmussen. In addition, Sandy Hougland, the team leader for the CBORD conversion, was honored, as were Michele Gross, Carla Wilmoth, and Judi Davidson, who converted the AT&T OneCard system to use BANNER IDs. ■

### BRAVO backups scheduled

The CIT has scheduled the winter and spring dates for backing up BRAVO, the server for BANNER, FAMIS, FOCUS, and BrioQuery. During the backups, these systems (and any

others that connect to BRAVO) will be unavailable from midnight Saturday until Sunday afternoon at 2:00 pm. The backup dates are:

- December 12, 1999
- January 9, 2000
- February 20, 2000
- March 12, 2000
- April 9, 2000
- May 14, 2000
- June 11, 2000

If you have any questions regarding this schedule, please contact your analyst/programmer in the CIT. ■

### FinAid gears up (again) for BANNER

After a year's delay caused by staffing issues, the Office of Financial Aid is once again

preparing for the implementation of BANNER. Director of Financial Aid Brian Lindeman and Assistant Director of Financial Aid Scott Juedes will begin work on the conversion in May of 2000, with a "go live" date of November 2000. ■

### On-site consultants in ACS

Four external consultants will be working with the ACS group this month to help finish up a number of projects associated with the Student Records module of BANNER. Three SCT consultants will be on site: Mike Clouser, to assist with report writing; Sandra Beaulac, for end-of-term process training for Student Records; and Dan Palubniak, for training and setup of the Web for Student upgrade. In addition, Vanitha Kotte from CompuWare will be working on site through January, writing a number of scripts and reports for the Registrar's and Admissions Offices. ■

# BANNER Banter: Setting up your Personal Menu

If you've been using BANNER for a while, you probably haven't bothered looking at the menus in a while; most people skip right past them, preferring to use the Direct Access box at the top to simply type in the form name and go. But every once in a while, a menu might come in handy: if you're trying to remember the name of a form that you don't use often, for example. This is where BANNER's Personal Menu feature can be helpful; users can refer to a personalized list, rather than searching through all the menus in a module trying to find the

form. Having a customized list of forms may also be helpful for users who would prefer to point and click in order to access a form, rather than having to type in a name.

The Personal Menu feature of BANNER allows you to set up such a customized list that is associated with your personal username and password. Once you've set up your Personal Menu, it will be available to you anytime you log into BANNER, and you can update it as frequently as necessary. Here's how:

## Setting up your Personal Menu in GUAPMNU

1. From the BANNER Main Menu, go to form GUAPMNU, shown at right. In the **Object** column in the middle of the screen, enter the seven-letter form names for each form that you would like to appear in your Personal Menu. For a list of BANNER forms, click the **Form** radio button, and a list will appear underneath. You can also see a list of BANNER jobs, menus, and QuickFlows if you would like to include these on your Personal Menu as well.

2. Once you've entered all the form names in the **Object** column, click the **Save** button at the bottom. This saves the forms you've specified to your Personal Menu.

3. Now click **Exit** to get back to the Main Menu, and click on the **Personal Menu** button at the bottom of the screen. The forms you just specified in GUAPMNU will now appear.

To see a list of forms, jobs, menus, or QuickFlows to include in your Personal Menu, click the appropriate radio button here. The list will appear in the Objects column directly underneath.

In this column, enter the seven-letter names of the forms that you want in your Personal Menu.

Be sure to Save when you've entered the objects you want in your menu.

Here is the Personal Menu you just set up in GUAPMNU. You can access this menu at any time by clicking the Personal Menu button at the bottom of the Main Menu screen. To access the forms in your Personal Menu, simply click on the form name.

# PRESTO perks up in fall registration

As a number of students, faculty, and staff know first-hand, last August's registration period with PRESTO left much to be desired. Some users experienced major system slowness, and others received frustrating "unable to connect" error messages. In addition, a bug in the BANNER course reservation function meant that some courses became overenrolled, which led to inaccurate class lists and headaches for some academic departments. Ouch.

"In investigating these problems, we determined that the database server, BRAVO, was hitting some performance limits," says OPUS Project Manager Monica Wachter. "We also observed some problems with the way the webserver software was connecting to PRESTO using processes called 'cartridges.'" Wachter notes that these cartridge problems explain why some faculty and students received the "unable to connect" error messages.

A few stop-gap measures were taken during the August registration to try to help matters; the CIT staff did almost continuous monitoring throughout the registration period and manually controlled the cartridge processes to maximize the number of successful connections. However, these time-intensive procedures were only workable for the short-term, and the staff knew that more permanent changes would have to be made before the November registration. After a good deal of research into the problems and potential solutions, a number of changes were made over the summer and in early fall. These included:

- Replacing BRAVO's two CPUs with two new CPUs that increased processing speed by about 40%. 1.5 GB's of memory was also added to BRAVO;
- Changes in the webserver software intended to reduce the number of "unable to connect" errors;
- Performing database tuning;
- Taking steps to speed up the Course Search function.

In addition to the technical changes made by CIT staff, Registrar Lori Gumpf also lengthened the November registration period, which allowed her to create more registration windows with fewer students each. This limited the number of people who could access PRESTO during each window, in an attempt to alleviate some of the heaviest load on the system.

The bug in the course reservation function, however, could not be solved, since the problem is with the software itself. Wachter notes that SCT, the company that makes BANNER, is currently working

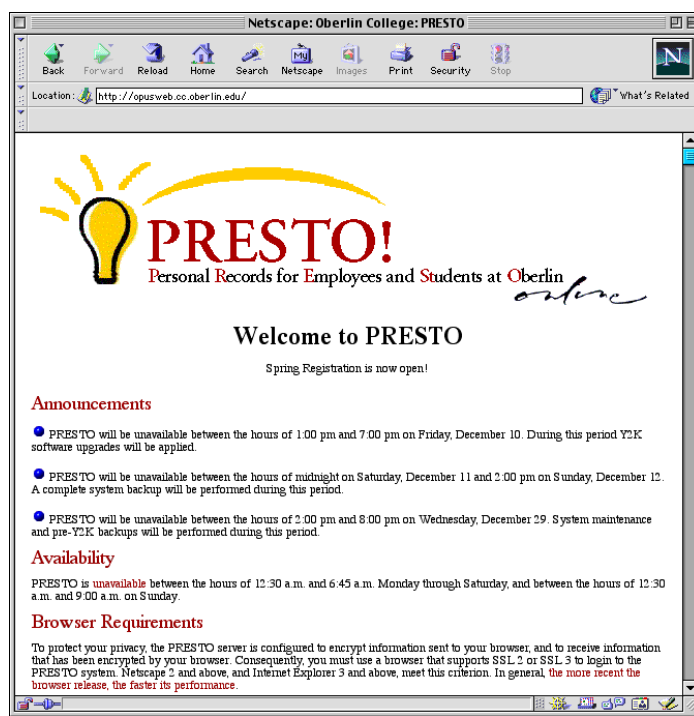
on a solution. In the meantime, Gumpf encouraged faculty to make any courses in which they wanted particular groups of students into consent classes, and then to use the PRESTO web-consent feature for November registration. Faculty also had the option of using Consent Access Labels (CALs) to consent students into "reserved" courses.

As the November registration began, the CIT and Registrar's Office held their collective breath: would all these changes make any difference? Fortunately, the answer was yes. According to Wachter, "the system handled the registration process very smoothly in November. All the changes we made, including spreading registration out, were helpful in improving system responsiveness."

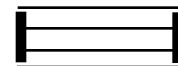
Faculty and students seem to have noticed a change as well; one student's response on PRESTO's electronic feedback form noted "Whatever you did between last semester and this one, keep it up! I sent you nasty feedback last semester when PRESTO was atrocious, but now it's great. Much better than OCVAAC. Thanks!"

That doesn't mean the work is over, however. There is still the reservation bug to be dealt with, and since every registration period is different, PRESTO remains (and will always be, to some extent) a work in progress.

And the fact that August registration tends to be larger and more chaotic than November means that the final verdict on the recent changes has yet to come in. Stay tuned. ■



## The Score



*The Score* is published by the Houck Center for Information Technology and the Oberlin Project for Unified Systems.

Editor: Ami Berger

Send questions and comments to:

*The Score*  
Center for Information Technology  
Mudd Center  
Oberlin College  
Oberlin, OH 44074  
440-775-6643  
OPUS@oberlin.edu  
www.oberlin.edu/~acs/opus