

# The Score

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The monthly review of the **O**berlin **P**roject for **U**nified **S**ystems for the staff and faculty of Oberlin College

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## feature

# OPUS's web feat: Welcome to PRESTO

When students sit down at their computers to register for fall classes this coming April, they'll be greeted by a brand new system. REGISTER, the old program on the VAX that has been used to register students for the past five years, is being put to rest. In its place, students will use the first piece of the massive BANNER Student Records implementation: the BANNER web registration product available through Oberlin's new administrative web system called PRESTO.

PRESTO, which stands for Personal Records for Employees and Students at Oberlin, is the name of the entire BANNER web product, which includes features for faculty and employees as well as students. The registration portion of PRESTO will be the first to go live when students use it to sign up for classes this spring, but eventually,

PRESTO will offer a number of administrative functions for all campus communities.

### what's in a name?

Deciding on the name PRESTO was a group effort involving a number of different constituencies around campus. When the web product is delivered from SCT (the maker of BANNER), it is simply called "The SCT University Web Page"—pretty boring. Plus, the design of the delivered product is very generic and uninteresting; the BANNER SR team knew right away that a snazzier look and feel was necessary.

The question was where to find a name that would accurately represent the Oberlin community as well as the variety of purposes that the web product would serve. It couldn't just be called REGISTER, like the old system on the VAX, because the web product will do much more than just registration. But just to call it "BANNER web" or "OPUS web" ran the risk of confusing the web product with either the overall BANNER system or the OPUS project itself.

Where else to turn but to Obies themselves? A contest to choose the name of the web product was sponsored by OPUS and generated a number of entries and suggestions from students, faculty, and staff. ACAC, the Oberlin Online Oversight team, and ITAG, the Information Technology Advisory Group (a group made up of students and faculty) all looked at the various entries and made suggestions.

Ultimately, the name PRESTO, submitted by CIT Director of Client Services Kevin Weidenbaum, was chosen. The design for the web page (see graphic at left), was put together by OPUS Communications Manager Ami Berger,

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*At right: the front page of PRESTO, the College's new administrative web system that will be used for the first time in April when students register for fall classes via the web.*



## ...feature

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who combined design elements from several of the entries and from the OPUS logo itself. The aim of the design was to offer a clean, easily navigated site, and one that would provide a sense of continuity within the entire BANNER system. Observant users will note, for example, that the arc over the word PRESTO in the web design is the same arc that appears over the word OPUS in the project logo.

### a true web feat

"The web product is designed to give appropriate, direct, streamlined access to those who need administrative data," says OPUS Project Manager Monica Wachter. Wachter notes that when ACAC was searching for the new system in 1996-7, there were prerequisites (also known as "functional requirements") that acceptable systems had to have in order to be considered viable for Oberlin's purposes. "The ability for students to self-register was a functional requirement during our software search process," Wachter says, "and web registration via PRESTO fulfills that requirement."

Getting PRESTO up and running for registration has been no easy task for the BANNER SR team. Since the web product is an entirely separate piece of software from the regular BANNER database (and lives on an entirely separate server), the work involved in getting the system to run is essentially doubled. The lead Analyst/Programmer for the web product is Dave Waldron, who has been working closely with Katie Styer, the lead A/P for the "regular" BANNER SR module, and Registrar Lori Gumpf, who is the SR

module's team leader.

The implementation of web registration has required a great deal of teamwork and communication, since there are so many different pieces of the project, and each piece affects the other pieces in a number of ways. What complicates the process even further is the need to figure out how to handle all the details that make Oberlin unique: registering College, Conservatory, and Double-Degree students; managing variable hour courses; entering Credit/No Entry courses; and managing the tremendous number of consent courses, just to name a few.

"The most challenging aspect of this is figuring out how to handle all of the 'special' Oberlin aspects to registration," says Katie Styer, who adds extended registration, add/drop only courses, complicated time ticketing rules, and the necessity for students with multiple majors to see all of their advisors to the list of details that make an Oberlin registration unusual.

In addition to these Obie-esque challenges, there are also the basic issues that surround the implementation of any new computing system. "We have to test our network services to make sure they are robust enough for the kind of loads that we're likely to experience during peak registration times," notes Monica Wachter, who adds that some of the complexity of this phase of the project comes from the unfamiliarity of working with web software. "We are preparing to run web server and application software that is completely new to us," Wachter points out. "The implementation team has to think of and test every possible scenario likely to happen in real life and run the system through its paces. If anything doesn't work the way we expect it to, we have to troubleshoot the problem and fix it without sacrificing any of our deadlines."

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## opus notes

### reader survey results

A big "thank you" to all who participated in the reader's survey published in the November 1998 issue of *The Score*. Your comments were enlightening and very much appreciated.

Since a number of responses were received on the same day, we picked one survey out of a hat to determine the winner of the free lunch. And the winner is...Paul Miller, a Carpenter Foreman in the Service Building. Enjoy your lunch on us, Paul, and thanks again to everyone who responded. Here's a sampling of reader comments:

- "The info about offices already using BANNER is the most useful to me."
- "I'd like to see an up-to-date timeline, including when we can expect web access to the budget."
- "This publication strikes me as only a tool to cheer on people who really like BANNER."
- "I like the pictures!"

- "Please include more tips on overcoming problems in BANNER."
- "I'm glad to have the chance to tell you how helpful this publication is."

Thanks once again to all the staff and faculty who participated in our survey. ■

### Res Life begins CBORD training

On December 1-3, the Residential Life staff began a series of training sessions on CBORD, the new software package that will track College housing information. CBORD trainer Eric Kirch led the sessions, which were a combination of hands-on training and "get acquainted and ask a lot of questions time," according to Sandy Hougland, who is coordinating the CBORD project.

Also attending the training sessions were the CBORD team members, including staff from the Administrative Computing Services

group in the CIT and the Student Accounts Office staff. The next training trip will take place January 26-28, and between then and now, the CBORD team will be making decisions about how information will be shared between the CBORD system and BANNER. "Residential Life and Services is also working on the attributes needed for the housing assignment processes," adds Hougland. "Wish us luck!" ■

### 1999 SCT Summit is coming

This March, a number of Oberlin staff will be attending SCT's annual meeting in Orlando, FL. The conference, called the SCT Summit, is a chance for BANNER users from all over the country to meet and discuss ways of managing BANNER on their campuses. For more information on Summit, visit the conference website at <http://www.sctcorp.com/summit/>. ■

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### “mock” registration

To make sure that the system does work the way it needs to for April registration, the SR team is planning a “dress rehearsal” for the April registration on February 16-18. Referred to as the “mock registration,” this large-scale test will mimic a real registration period as closely as possible. Approximately 125 people, including students, faculty, and administrators, will “register” during those three days using mock BANNER IDs set up specifically for the purpose of the test.

“Simply put, a mock registration is a test of ALL of the procedures associated with registration,” says Katie Styer. “We need to have all of the policies and procedures involved with registration in place before we can do the mock.”

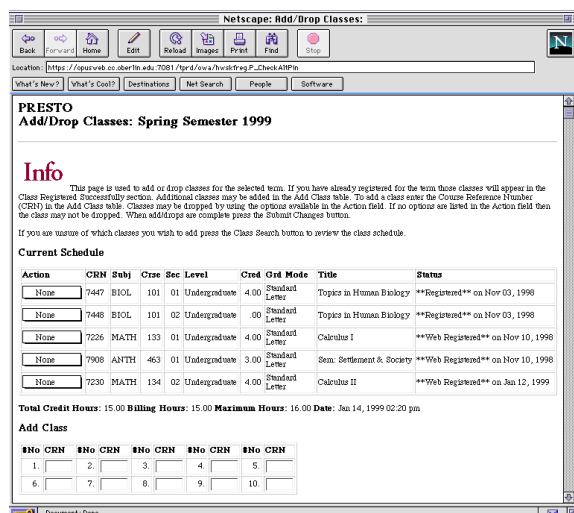
And having all those policies and procedures in place is no easy task. It means setting up dozens of “mock” identities to test (converting all the “real” student data such as name, gender, class, advisor, and major also needs to happen in time for the actual registration). It means writing numerous computer programs to accomplish tasks like assigning the PINs that will allow students secured access to their

records. It means rewriting every single brochure, letter, form, and card to reflect the new system. It means hours and hours of testing. And it means that all of that has to be done in advance, since the mock registration requires almost as much preparation as the real thing.

It hasn't been easy for the SR team, and the nervousness about the mock registration and the first registration in PRESTO will continue until the very last student has registered for their very last class in April. But as Wachter notes, it's better to be nervous now than not to be ready when the time comes: “The entire team is under tremendous pressure right now,” Wachter says. “The February mock and April registration dates are looming very large. But meeting our deadlines now will ultimately mean a successful registration and a successful production cutover for PRESTO.” ■

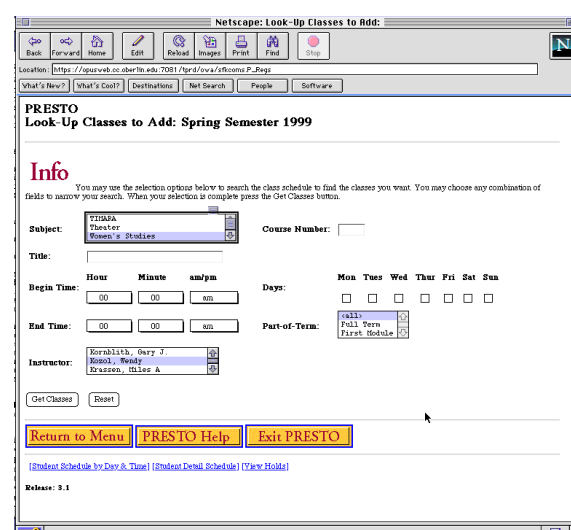
*If you would like to participate in the mock registration taking place on February 16-18, OPUS would love to have your help! Contact opus@oberlin.edu or call Ami Berger at 6643 for more information.*

## A preview of PRESTO: Registration on the Web



The Look Up Classes to Add screen, at right, allows students to search the database to find courses for which they'd like to register. Users can search on a number of criteria, including department, title, begin/end time, and instructor. Clicking on the “Get Classes” button on the bottom will produce a list of courses that meet the search criteria. From this list, students can automatically attempt to get into the course. The Look Up screen also provides links to screens that show a student's schedule in grid format, and to a screen that allows students to view any registration holds that might not allow them to register.

The Add/Drop screen, at left, allows students to view their schedule in its entirety. The screen shows the Course Reference Number (or CRN, the number BANNER uses to identify courses and sections in the system), the subject and course number, the grading mode, and the title of the course. If the student wants to drop the course during the registration session, they can do so by clicking on the “Action” pull-down box on the far left. The “Add Class” grid on the bottom allows students to enter a new CRN for another course.



# After OCCAM: Producing the Course Catalog

As BANNER slowly but surely makes its way through the various departments and offices on campus, some of the old systems that those offices have been using for years are being sent to the legacy system graveyard. The most obvious example of this is REGISTER, the class registration system that will be replaced this spring by the web registration product on PRESTO.

However, there are several smaller systems also associated with course and course registration that are biting the proverbial dust. One such system is OCCAM, the Oberlin Course Catalog/Automated Manufacture system. For the past few years, OCCAM was where departmental secretaries went every winter to enter new courses or update course information so that the Course Catalog could be printed in the spring in time for registration.

Well, OCCAM is no more. Beginning this winter, an entirely new procedure for updating the course catalog will be put into effect. Surprisingly, this new procedure has less to do with BANNER than you might think. True, the course information will be entered into BANNER once it's been finalized by the Deans of the College and

Conservatory, but this entry will be done in the Deans' Offices, not by departmental secretaries.

Course changes will be made by the departments in Word documents and then sent to the appropriate Dean for approval. Once they've been approved, the Deans' Offices will enter the changes into BANNER. The process has been redesigned to eliminate much of the back-and-forth that used to accompany course changes, and will also mean that departmental secretaries won't have to fight with OCCAM (which can be a notoriously cranky system) every winter.

"The new procedure will streamline production of the both the hard-copy catalog and the web publication," says Monica Wachter, OPUS Project Manager. Wachter points out that the ability to create

the course changes in Word will allow departments to save formatting and diacritical marks in their course descriptions that OCCAM could not accept. In addition, the word processed documents are easily transferred into HTML (or a web authoring tool) for easier posting on the Web. ■

The screenshot shows a window titled "Basic Course Information Form (SCACRSE 3.1.) (TPRD)". It contains several input fields and sections:

- Subject: ENGL, English
- Course: 101, Term: 199902
- From Term: 199800, To Term: 999999
- Course Title: English Composition
- College: AS, College of Arts & Sciences
- Division: ENGL, English
- Status: A, Active
- Approval: A, Approved
- CIP: 230101, English, General
- Hours: 3.00 (CEU/Cred), 3.00 (Billing), 3.00 (Lecture), 3.00 (Contact)
- Repeat Information: Limit, Max Hours, Repeat Status
- Buttons: Copy, Rollback, Save, Exit

Above: a screen shot of the BANNER form SCACRSE, where course information is entered and edited.

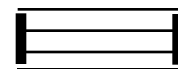
## coming next month

Here's a preview of next month's *Score*:

- A full report on the "mock" registration taking place February 16-18
- Getting ready for "live": the Student Records team prepares for April registration
- What's coming next: an up-to-date OPUS timeline

Need information about something specific about OPUS? Not a problem. Drop us a line at [opus@oberlin.edu](mailto:opus@oberlin.edu).

The  
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