System IT Board Report
September 10, 2024

Rural College Consortium Milestone: RCC Sectionizer

On August 19thd, System IT successfully met a significant milestone related to the Rural College Consortium (RCC). The RCC sectionizer went live in production. The Sectionizer consists of a dashboard for viewing students enrolled in small, pooled sections at each of the colleges who need to be placed in into a combined teaching section. Processes and reports are also included in the Sectionizer to ensure appropriate placement and management of student enrollments.

As the start of registration draws closer, the seven colleges, CNCC, LCC, MCC, NJC, OC, PCC and TSC, discuss their own college needs, evaluating courses that may consistently have low enrollment or are frequently cancelled and work together to identify courses that can be shared. A registration section for that course is placed on the schedule at each home college who wishes to participate in sharing that particular course. Just before the semester term starts, the students are automatically pooled into a single teaching section at the college which is teaching the course. Students register at their home college and all other activities such as financial aid, advising, paying tuition and fees also occur at the home college. Keeping everything as normal and consistent as possible for the student is a very important component of the technology for RCC. The technology for RCC is very closely aligned with the technology for CO Online. Many of the components for CO Online were leveraged for the RCC and common base code is used between the two applications. However, for CO Online a key goal is to place the optimum number of students into each teaching section from very large, pooled sections and be able to quickly scale up additional sections if demand for a course is high. For the RCC a primary goal is to combine enrollments from the rural colleges and have at least one academically and financially viable teaching section and ensure that students' progress towards a credential aren't delayed by canceled or unavailable courses. Since RCC courses are on premise and at a specific date and time, the scheduling is very important and needs to match across the consortium. Students who are from a different college than the college teaching the course attend via video conferencing such as Zoom. They are full participants in the classroom even though they attend virtually. The $8.6 million funding for video conferencing hardware, network and other upgrades were provided by the Joint Technology Committee of the Colorado Legislature.

In preparation for the Sectionizer go-live, System IT worked with the RCC Project Manager and the RCC scheduler to ensure the accuracy of the data so that it could be integrated into Banner, our Student Information System (SIS) and D2L, our Learning Management System (LMS). Earlier this year, several training sessions were done for the RCC college Registrars and Schedulers to ensure they understood how the courses would be set up and what the RCC pooled registration and pooled teaching sections would look in Banner. These Town Halls were designed to make sure the colleges and

system office had information they needed to support the new RCC Sectionizer processes and ultimately to support students enrolled in pooled and teaching sections.

The go-live went smoothly from the technical perspective, with only a few very minor issues reported. These minor issues were quickly resolved, ensuring minimal impact on students. Extensive use of student enrollment scenarios and testing helped to identify and address potential issues prior to the go live.

Additionally, our Institutional Research & Business Intelligence (IRBI) department has been actively ensuring that reporting for RCC is accessible, accurate, and consistent. Working with the CO Online Implementation Strategy team, who also assisted with RCC, IRBI advised on how business processes would impact reporting at both the system level and colleges. They have also been supporting the initiative by building new and modifying dozens of existing reports to account for RCC courses and satisfy reporting needs not met by the Sectionizer dashboard.

Like CO Online, the RCC sectionizer takes care of all the integration required into the Banner Student Information System, from placing the student into the teaching section, generating the data and codes that identify the student, generating the integration to the Desire2Learn (D2L) learning management system, handling any changes if the student adds or drops a course, processes no shows, grades, generates the academic history at the home college and provides a complete roster of all students for the faculty teaching the course. Also, like CO Online, there is a financial model associated with the RCC and the tuition revenue is shared between the teaching college and the home college.

Also, like CO Online, the technology for the RCC is very scalable. Although this Fall's 15-week term only had 55 students enrolled in four RCC courses, the software can easily scale to handle any number of students or courses. It can also operate like CO Online and pool students into optimum sized teaching sections should enrollment growth and business processes require that capability.

We are very pleased to be able to support the Rural College Consortium with this technology and can't wait to see it grow. Although currently working with individual courses, the presidents and their academic vice presidents are looking at opportunities for shared programs, especially in high demand fields where the courses in the program can be shared across multiple colleges, increase opportunities for students to participate in programs that might not be able to be offered at their college, if the college had to provide all the major courses.