

## Heading toward ‘Final Four’ campuses

Everything won't be ready to operate completely and perfectly, but North Dakota University System project teams are advancing toward "go live" the first week in January for ConnectND's Finance and Human Resource Management Systems at the "Final Four"—Minot State University, Minot State University-Bottineau, North Dakota State University and the University of North Dakota.

Three rounds of testing have been completed and long days of work continue to address outstanding issues and refine systems features, including some functions that will have to be finalized after the PeopleSoft software is put into use.

HRMS training began Nov. 29 and will continue until Dec. 9. Finance training is scheduled the weeks of Dec. 6 and Dec. 13.

Campuses are holding forums to update employees and familiarize them with training and information resources. During weekly sessions over the Interactive Video Network, the "five" live campuses are sharing what they have learned.

As part of the transition, financial data and transactions since July 1 on the final four campuses will be converted to PeopleSoft in late December. The current "legacy" system will be frozen once that conversion begins and new transactions will be held for processing in January. Payday will still occur Thursday, Dec. 30, as scheduled.



*Wes Mathews, Minot State University, and Diane Nelson, University of North Dakota, compare notes during ConnectND Human Resource Management Systems training. Mathews is a subject matter expert and Nelson is a module lead for HRMS.*

### Steering Committee to assess progress

The NDUS ConnectND Steering Committee will meet Dec. 9 in Bismarck to review the status of the new Finance and HRMS systems and also discuss campus preparedness. Steering Committee members Alice Brekke, UND, and Jean Ostrom-Blonigen, NDSU, helped test grants and contracts modules and will provide a report to the committee. Campus implementation team chairs will share their perspectives.

Last July, the State Board of Higher Education held back Finance and HRMS implementation six months on those four campuses due to concerns about readiness of an adequate grants and contracts system. Any change to that revised schedule would require the board's approval. Although the committee's final review is yet to come, every effort is being made and a January go-live is the expectation. A recent project oversight report states that it "...could not find any acceptable alternative to going live in January."

Student systems are being phased in at the four campuses, continuing with financial aid software in February. Admissions and recruitment "went live" in September.

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## New York City campuses hear ConnectND story

Grant Crawford, NDUS ConnectND project director, was a keynote speaker Nov. 19 at the third annual information/instruction technology conference sponsored by the City University of New York and the Center for Digital Education.



*Grant Crawford*

His topic was “ERP Implementation: Brought to You While You Wait.” The talk focused on the people involved with the North Dakota project more so than the technology. The conference was held at John Jay College, in New York City. CUNY, which serves more than 400,000 students at 19 colleges, is preparing for implementation of an ERP (enterprise resource planning) software system.

## Portal team planning for campus branding

The ConnectND Campus Connection portal will eventually resemble individual campus Web sites.

An organization’s identity is one of its most strategic assets. Thus each institution will manage its campus “brand” on ConnectND to display a consistent image. The Campus Connection portal has been upgraded to a new version that supports campus branding.

When the portal team completes the planning for this change, campus decision-makers will be advised of the need to design their campus brand. Campus webmasters will be asked to supply the graphics for portal team use in restyling the portal to reflect the individual campus identities.

The new portal version supports campus branding through the use of “dynamic roles” and “managed content.” Implementing dynamic roles will require redesigning security and assigning content to the user “roles” within an institution. Each role will then be tied to a view representing the “look and feel” of the local campus.

## Oversight reports indicate project on track

The biweekly oversight status report (11/11/04 through 11/24/04) upgraded the overall ConnectND project from “yellow” to “yellow/green,” noting that “it appears the most significant issues have been addressed and the project is on track to complete as planned.” Yellow indicates “good probability” of meeting dates and acceptable quality; green indicates “strong probability.”

The project risk continued to be coded “yellow,” noting that there were still some grants and contracts issues to be refined and some concern about the compressed training schedule as Finance and Human Resource Management Systems prepare to go live in January on the final four campuses. The state side of the project also needed to address some reporting issues.

The oversight document detailed positive trends with the handling of tickets by the state Information Technology Department Support Center and concluded that patterns were normal for the NDUS Help Desk’s open tickets even though total numbers had increased. All oversight status reports are posted on the ConnectND Web site.

The previous oversight status report (10/30/04-11/10/04) included a lengthy commentary asserting the importance and necessity of rolling out Finance and HRMS on the four campuses in January. The report concluded: “I think that the sooner we recognize this fact, the better off the project will be. We will stop trying to achieve the impossible and focus on overachieving what is possible. Because I know if we set reasonable expectations, the staff assigned to this project will always exceed our expectations. We can then set our focus on continually improving our solution until it does meet all of our needs, and then some. This may not be the best solution, but based upon the information above, it may be the best that we can do. From the reports, I believe we can reach 80-90 percent of the needed functionality and that the last 10-20 percent will need to be worked on after campuses have a chance to really use the system in production and have had a chance to adjust their own processes to meet the new needs.”

## Analysis forecasts return on investment

ConnectND, with a total implementation cost of \$42.5 million, will generate a project payback or positive return on investment in eight years, according to an updated report.

The “Value of ConnectND” report states: “Not only will the project generate a wide range of direct and indirect benefits conservatively estimated at \$95,894,440 over 10 years, but it will enable the state to tackle the future with a highly integrated, shared state information system that supports the needs and goals of the Legislature, governor, the State Board of Higher Education and North Dakota citizens and businesses.” The return for every year beyond the 10 years used in the analysis will be significant and ConnectND’s most important benefit to the state, according to the report, is improved customer service.

The report also asserts that “the state will potentially avoid between \$58 and \$64 million of costs for software replacement and/or upgrades that have been deferred by state agencies and higher education in anticipation of the new functionality from ConnectND.”

The 40-page Return on Investment and Benefits Analysis was presented to the Legislature’s Budget Section this fall. The report is posted on the ConnectND Web site at <http://www.nodak.edu/connectnd/repository/plans/ROI-Update-V1-2004-09-27.pdf>. Or, at the Web site, click on “Return on Investment,” the last entry under the Featured Items column, at left.

## Oracle bid for PeopleSoft at stalemate

The battle to resolve Oracle Corporation’s bid to take over PeopleSoft Inc. may continue for at least several more months and could be resolved during the PeopleSoft annual meeting in the spring.



Oracle has announced that 60 percent of PeopleSoft’s shares were tendered, but PeopleSoft says it believes at majority of its stockholders feel the company stock is worth more than Oracle’s offer of \$24. A Delaware judge held 10 days of trial in October on a shareholder rights plan and other issues in dispute between the two companies. Trial will resume later this month.

In an e-mail, PeopleSoft Co-President Phil Wilmington said: “It is important to remember that the tender results do not mean Oracle will be able to acquire PeopleSoft. Oracle cannot purchase the tendered shares unless our board has removed the PeopleSoft shareholder rights plan. This plan, often called a ‘poison pill,’ is designed to protect shareholders by preventing an unsolicited buyer from purchasing a significant percentage of PeopleSoft’s shares without the Board’s approval.”

The PeopleSoft board, Wilmington added, also believes it likely Oracle will wage a proxy contest in an attempt to replace the four members of the seven-person PeopleSoft board who are up for reelection at the company’s 2005 Annual Meeting. “We are confident that our stockholders will be supportive of PeopleSoft,” he said.

## Words & acronyms

**ERP**—“Enterprise Resource Planning” System or “Enterprise Resource Package.” Essentially, it means an administrative software system that covers the entire enterprise – from students to employees to financial management. While our current administrative systems (commonly known as SAMIS or CICS) were developed long before “ERP” was even thought of, they are essentially our ERP today.

**Legacy System**—An application in which a company or organization has previously already invested considerable time and money. Examples of legacy systems to be replaced by ConnectND are CICS (used by NDUS staff), ALFI (used by students) and SAMIS (used in state government).

**MAXIMUS**— Founded in 1975, serves as the implementation partner on the Connect North Dakota Project, and will be responsible for developing an implementation and deployment plan that addresses the major business areas, key agency and campus participants and critical project completion dates.

**PeopleSoft**— Founded in the mid-1980s, this company builds applications on a client-server platform instead of using the traditional mainframe. This product should provide both the state and the university system with the ability to operate within a real-time environment on a system-wide basis.

**WebEX**—A licensed program for interactive communication over the World Wide Web and telephone. Sessions can be recorded and archived.

**Web-streamed**—Recorded live and broadcast real-time via the Internet to those who cannot be at the event location.

### About ConnectND

#### What is ConnectND?

The CONNECT ND project is the implementation of *PeopleSoft's* ERP system that will replace North Dakota's current administrative computer systems. The ERP system will serve as the administrative systems for the entire enterprise – from students to employees to financial management.

#### Who is involved in ConnectND?

All of North Dakota State Government, including the North Dakota University System, is involved in this project.

#### How is the ConnectND project organized?

The project has been organized by module (functional area) into three state groups (Financial, Human Resources Management System, and Technical) and four higher education groups (Financial, Human Resources Management System, Student Administration, and Technical).

## Fyi & updates

### Having fun, yet?

*A sense of humor can be priceless in learning to use new software systems. An example is the philosophy of Mad magazine's mascot Alfred E. Neumann.*



### Information available from training site

The University System Training and Documentation Web site <http://www.und.edu/dept/cndtrain/> hosts documentation and demonstrations about the NDUS ConnectND Student Administration, Finance and Human Resource Management systems. A variety of information and training materials are accessible for students, faculty and staff. Campus Web sites also provide localized material.

Specific problems with ConnectND are coordinated through the NDUS Help Desk by calling 1-866-457-6387 or submitting a “ticket” at <http://www.help.nodak.edu/connectnd.html>.

### Links mentioned

- **Connect ND:** [www.nodak.edu/connectnd](http://www.nodak.edu/connectnd)
- **MAXIMUS:** [www.maximus.com](http://www.maximus.com)
- **North Dakota University System:** [www.ndus.nodak.edu](http://www.ndus.nodak.edu)
- **PeopleSoft:** [www.peoplesoft.com](http://www.peoplesoft.com)
- **State of North Dakota:** [www.discovernd.com/](http://www.discovernd.com/)

Comments and suggestions regarding this publication are welcome.

We encourage questions about this newsletter or the project. To facilitate this process, you may ask a question electronically through the Web site FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) section. It's also a place to view the questions others have asked and the responses of the project teams.



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