

11i Implementation Issues at Ithaca College. The I's have it!

Bonnie Griffin, Ithaca College
Bill Stratton, BOSS Corporation
Bill Dunham, BOSS Corporation

Introduction

After a detailed analysis of several software packages, Ithaca College selected Oracle as their choice to move their strategic systems in Human Resources and Financials into the Web-based world. This paper describes their implementation strategies for Release 11i as they shoot for a “go-live” date in 2001.

Ithaca College is a private, residential, comprehensive college with approximately 5,700 students and 1,300 employees located at the end of Cayuga Lake in Ithaca, NY. The human resource system started out in 1975 as an ISI system (Integral Systems Inc.). Over these twenty-five years the flat file system was converted to a hierarchical database and then a relational database and moved from a UNISYS to a Digital VAX computer. If ISI were still in business, they would no longer recognize the system.

The current legacy system is a fully integrated human resource/payroll system and supports some very sophisticated processes. However, there are only a handful of employees on campus who have direct access to the system and even fewer employees can retrieve information programmatically. Primary goals of our project are to provide distributed access across campus, employee self-service applications, and workflow enabled business processing.

A “Working Group” (functional users from Budget, Human Resources, Student Employment, Payroll, and the Provost’s Office) for the HRMIS Project at Ithaca College was convened to develop scripted demonstration documents. This was a fairly lengthy process, but devising each scenario was really very easy, as all were actual situations that we were dealing with at the time. A group of high-level administrators (from each of the aforementioned offices) was also brought together to review policy issues identified as part of creating the demonstration documents. That group had trouble believing that some of the scenarios were real life situations!

We invited PeopleSoft, Oracle, and SAP to demonstrate their products based on our scripted demonstrations (PeopleSoft and Oracle were invited to campus a second time for further examination). Each vendor was scored on each scenario outlined in the scripted demos and scores were processed through the Gartner Group’s Decision Drivers software to help validate that the decision we made would be the correct one. PeopleSoft and Oracle survived both on-site visits and scored so equally, according to Decision Drivers, that we asked for visits to schools nearby that recently implemented each product. Both schools we visited were very pleased with their new systems. Each system, however, was under-utilized but still provided enhanced functionality to each school.

This project started out as a search for a new human resource system. Towards the end of our selection process, we decided to replace our financial accounting system also. Vendors returned once again to demonstrate their financial accounting packages. By their return visit, Oracle was able to show glimpses of version 11i. The decision to look to the same vendor for both a human resource and financial accounting system was a significant factor in selecting Oracle. Oracle’s financial system functionality could not be matched. Further, there was a general understanding that our decision for Oracle was for release 11i only.

Next began the selection process for implementation partners. We provided three consulting firms with the same material we used for the vendor selection process. Each consultant firm also visited campus twice. Two of the three consulting firms were very large organizations also specializing in financial auditing services. BOSS clearly acknowledged increased complexities of the human resource implementation as compared to accounting system implementations, and “RIGHT” practices for Ithaca College as opposed to “best” practices was emphasized. BOSS was also best prepared and provided the most professional

presentations for both visits to campus. Everyone involved in our project simply felt most comfortable with the BOSS representatives. BOSS cinched the deal by offering to parallel our implementation of 11i including the same hardware selected by Ithaca College.

A contest to name the project was conducted and the winning entry was Parnassus. The significance of the project name is as follows: Parnassus is a mountain in Greece at the foot of which lay the town of Delphi, home of the famous Oracle. In Greek mythology, Parnassus was sacred to the Greek god Apollo whose oracle resided at Delphi. Many painters have chosen Parnassus as a subject through the years, but perhaps the most famous rendering is Raphael's fresco displayed in the Vatican. This view of "Mount Parnassus" with Apollo leading the choir of Muses makes Parnassus an obvious choice for the project name, given the many talents of the creative team assembled for this project. Our "Oracle" will reside on a Sun server in Information Technology and will be accessed on desktop PCs throughout campus to provide information to guide and enhance future decision-making at Ithaca College.

Oracle Applications 11i Technology

The Technology Stack

The following technology stack is used:

- Oracle8i – database
- Oracle Application Server 4.0
- Oracle Enterprise Manager 2.1
- Oracle Developer 6i
- Oracle Discoverer 3i

Improved Application Usability

This has been achieved due to the upgrade from Forms 4.5 to Forms 6i.

- Forms are displayed with a single container window, with a single toolbar and menu.
- Broader range of colors and a more "Oracleized" look and feel
- Required fields are distinguished by a different background color
- There is a list of values (LOV) indicator for each field containing a list
- Long running queries trigger a window to pop-up to interrupt or cancel
- Use of the right mouse button for pop-up windows – like MS Windows!
- Bubble help is available for all iconic buttons

- Concurrent Manager was enhanced to launch Reports 6i reports
- Existing reports can run under Reports 6i,
- All new reports should be written in Reports 6i

- Dates can be formatted anyway you like! Dates to be entered or viewed can be set to a user's preferred format.

- Radix support allows users to enter and view numbers in radix format appropriate to their country of operation.
- Support of Unicode character set using Oracle's UTF-8 character set for running any combination of languages
- Better application messages that are more meaningful and follow a standard. These messages will be translated to many languages in which Oracle Applications are being used.

Concurrent Manager Improvements

There have been several enhancements that include:

- All concurrent manager forms become part of Enterprise Manager
- Application Management pack allows system and database administrators to stop point fingers at each other through the ability to monitor and analyze concurrent process, database and OS performance through one package.
- New APIs
- Advanced scheduling APIs to schedule concurrent managers from external calendars
- Request Set Submission API – programmatic submission of request sets
- Increment Parameters API allows changes to increment request parameters after the request has run.
- Post-Request Process API allows registration of PL/SQL code to run after the completion of a concurrent request. You can run different code based on outcome of concurrent program, such as if success then print and clean log files, if failure send me an email!
- PL/SQL File API allows output to be generated from imbedded PL/SQL within an SQL*Plus program.

Enhanced Online Help

- Online help system is easier to patch, customize and search.
- Changes can be applied without breaking hyperlinks or disturbing navigation hierarchy
- Online help can be easily customized and extended with your own help pages
- Standard pages can be replaced with your own customized help pages
- Much easier searches for information using Oracle's interMedia text searching. Searches can be performed from one application or the entire system.

Security Enhancements

- New LDAP integration utility allows information to flow between an LDAP-compliant directory server and Oracle Applications user directory. This integration avoids redundant user administration by sharing information across systems.
- The Oracle Applications Navigator now accepts application user name, password, responsibility and business group information from the command line. This will now allow the sign-on screen to be bypassed for applications needing this access method.

UNIX vs. Windows NT

The primary driver behind the selection of UNIX was the user installation base and Oracle Corporation's tier one release for Oracle Applications 11i on the UNIX OS. Some of the concerns with Windows NT were the administrative issues, Oracle Applications install base, as well as release schedule for NT, and performance. Ithaca used a variety of information to support their decision including white papers and information from Sun Corporation, the Gartner Group, and Oracle Corporation.

UNIX was chosen as the OS, which basically led to the selection of the hardware platform, Sun. There was some concern within the Technology department that UNIX wasn't a good choice because they were primarily an NT and VMS shop and didn't have the expertise. But along came a good UNIX training plan to provide the basics of the UNIX OS and away they went!

The selection of the Sun hardware was not a difficult choice for Ithaca. One of the driving forces behind the decision was the Oracle Applications release schedule for Sun Solaris. With Sun being a tier 1 partner of Oracle Corporation, and a benefit of being one of the first OS releases for Oracle Applications 11i, the hardware selection was an easy choice.

To date, Ithaca has installed Sun Solaris 2.6, created two database instances, and has installed the Oracle Applications release 11i.

Installation Enhancements and Experiences

- *Rapid Installation* of basic application installations is much faster than previously required. This is based on Oracle Installer technology and is integrated with Enterprise Manager and Software Manager. This product will be released in phases and is supposed to eliminate AutoInstall. Excellent tool, it made the installation of the applications much easier than prior installations!
- *Configuration files* are used to store detail configuration information for each installation, which has improved administration and the application of patches. Information about the configuration such as "database server" or "forms and concurrent processing server" is installed on this server, never having to be entered again. Basically, the system tells you what is installed.

- *Improved installation performance analysis* has been activated
- *Non-interactive application of patches!* Patches can be applied automatically if you dare!
- It is now much easier to apply multiple patches. No duplication of effort by AutoPatch process each time multiple drivers are required.
- Patch summary files are now produced! No more sifting through endless pages of detail to extract basic information. Patch history is still retained in the *applptch.txt* file.

Lessons Learned

Since Ithaca was one of the first customers in the country to purchase and install 11i we had to deal with some of the follow issues:

- The unavailability of Oracle Applications release 11i and Oracle technology (Forms/Reports 6i) training/education from Oracle Education
- Not all Oracle Support personnel were familiar with issues relating to 11i installations – this will improve with time.
- Oracle Applications release 11i is certified for Windows 95, 98, and NT 4.0 for desktop clients only.
- Oracle Applications had not been certified on Apple Macintosh Runtime for Java (MRJ 2.2) and MS Explorer 5.0. Approximately 40% of Ithaca’s desktop personal computers are Apple Macs.

Oracle Financials 11i

Oracle Applications Release 11i contains enhancements and new functionality, as well as a migration to new technology, added to the solid foundation of Oracle Applications Release 11. Discussed here will be a high level description of the new enhancements and how they affected the Ithaca College implementation.

Some New Financials Features

There is a new window called the “accounting lines window” that you can view transaction information within Oracle AP, AR, FA, PA, PO, INV and WIP prior to posting to Oracle GL. Information such as account, the debit and credit amount, the currency and exchange rate information are displayed.

There is also a feature that many organizations may find very helpful, the *t-accounts* window. This window allows you to view any sub-ledger accounting entry or GL JE in a graphical t-account format. Information can be viewed by the accounting Flexfield structure or summarized by account segment. The data presented in this window can be exported to a tab-delimited file for importing into spreadsheets.

One of the best enhancements has to be the *drilldown capability* in GL. There is now the ability to drilldown into Oracle Projects, Receiving, Inventory, WIP and Assets from GL to view the line items and transactions that make-up the GL journal line. The current GL to AP and AR drilldowns have been enhanced to view the complete subledger transactions.

There have also been changes in *enterprise tax control and reporting*, with localized compliant tax handling, audit procedures and returns support. There has been also increased integration of products such

as Taxware Sales/Use Tax System and Vertex Quantum. More information can be found in the Oracle Applications users guides on the new tax enhancements.

There are many new features to Oracle Financials that go beyond the scope of this paper. If you wish to learn more about new features of Oracle Applications Release 11i, please contact Oracle Corporation or visit their web site www.oracle.com

Oracle General Ledger 11i

First, General Ledger offers the AutoAllocation Workbench/Step Down Allocations. This enables you to automatically allocate any financial amount throughout your organization using the Workbench. General Ledger also provides the AutoAllocation Workbench for Oracle Projects users. The Step-Down Allocation Sets new functionality enables you to distribute revenues, expenses, and other financial amounts through multiple levels in the organization. Second, there is an enhancement providing a new window that lets you view any subledger accounting entry or GL journal entry in a graphical T-account format. Third, you can now drilldown to other subsidiary systems like Purchasing, Inventory, Projects in addition to Payables and Receivables. Fourth, improvements in concurrent processes allow for speedier processing of transactions involving summary accounts.

Oracle Cash Management 11i

The Release 11i of Oracle Cash Management offers the ability for Oracle Project Costing to integrate with Oracle Cash Management to automatically generate cash forecasts (in any currency) for projects you specify. This functionality is not available in Release 11. Also new to R11i is the integration of Oracle Payroll so that you can reconcile checks issued by Oracle Payroll with your bank account using Oracle Cash Management. Cash management also provides better reconciliation of voided payments from AP and reversed receipts from AR.

Oracle Accounts Payables 11i

New enhancements for Oracle Accounts Payables include the Invoice Gateway, Invoice Matching to Receipts and Exchange Rate Based on Receipt Date. The Invoice Gateway will help you quickly process large volumes of invoices that do not require extensive online validation or extensive online defaulting of values. The Invoice Matching of Receipts allows you to match an invoice to one or more receipt transactions. The Exchange Rate enhancement will record a more precise exchange rate variance when conducting business in regions with large currency fluctuations.

Self-Service Expenses

Self-Service Expenses release 11i includes these new features; refund tracking, Oracle Projects integration and a disconnect mode for field support personnel.

The *refund tracking* feature allows employees to enter expense item refunds into Web Employees. Their refunds will then be tracked in AP and applied to unpaid expense reports. The *integration with Oracle Projects* will allow employees to enter project related expenses via a Self-Service expense report. Information will be validated and used to create an expense item GL accounts based on rules in Projects. The Invoice import interface will then be used to bring data into AP for project related expenses for project burdening and tracking. The *configurable disconnect mode* for field support is a great enhancement for remote personnel. Data will be uploaded into Self-Service Expenses from an expense spreadsheet. Data will be validated during this process.

Oracle Accounts Receivable 11i

Oracle Accounts Receivables includes such enhancements as AutoAccounting Enhancements, Financial Intelligence for Receivables (which include Receipt Analysis and Billing Analysis) and Reporting Enhancements. AutoAccounting is an automated process that you configure to default the general ledger accounting information for your transactions.

Oracle Purchasing 11i

Oracle Purchasing/Payables enhanced functionality gives you the ability to reclaim or recover tax based on a variable recovery rate, let you automatically recognize the extent to which you are liable for tax, and ensure you are recovering allowable taxes.

Oracle Public Sector Budgeting 11i

Expected enhancements to Oracle Public Sector Budgeting include easier distribution and use of worksheets.

Oracle Business Intelligence

The Financial Intelligence works with Discoverer to provide insight to financial performance with multi-dimensional analysis. The Receipt and Billing Analysis are part of the Financial Intelligence. The reporting enhancements will provide greater report formatting capabilities.

HRMS Modules and 11i

Human Resources

As pointed out in the opening section, the main driving force for implementing new systems at Ithaca College was the desire to improve on the many Human Resource processes. One of the first steps in Project Parnassus was to map out all of the current business processes for all of the affected areas throughout the college. We used Visio to diagram these processes so that we could easily see the flow of information from one department to another. These diagrams quickly pointed out areas that needed improvement and streamlining. We also wanted to take advantage of the new Workflow embedded process in 11i and the Self Service features.

Within the Human Resources area, we divided the processes into the following categories:

- Hiring and Staffing Needs
- Employee Data
- Compensation
- HR Processing / Actions
- Student Employees

When completed, we mapped over forty different processes in these diagrams. We also used the Selection Process document mentioned in the opening section to generate the Requirements Mapping matrix. This matrix was then compared to Oracle's standard functionality and the anticipated new features announced for Release 11i to generate a list of "gaps". Below is a discussion on the new features we hope to utilize and the gaps that we must address through customizations or business process redesign.

Ithaca College plans to fully utilize the Applicant Tracking module along with Position Control to monitor and track the various open positions throughout the campus. One of our major customizations we

identified includes a workflow-based process that tracks the necessary approvals before a position is considered vacant and open. This process will be discussed in more detailed in a following section. Our initial look at Applicant Tracking reveals that standard functionality in the product should handle the vast majority of Ithaca College's requirements. Areas that may need some refining include AAP reporting of applicant data and controlling access to applicant records when the applicant is applying for multiple positions. Ithaca College also plans to use third party software like Resumix to scan and store resume data. They also will utilize the Self Service features that will allow current employees to apply for open positions.

Tenure and Tenure tracking is very important for higher education organizations such as Ithaca College. We were very interested to see this mentioned as one of the bullet points for future releases of 11i. For the time being, we will have to implement this ourselves with the features delivered with 11i. Our first look at the new Extra Information Types (EIT) that are included on the Position record should allow us to enter tenure related data about the position. Actual tenure tracking data will be stored on the employee record using a Special Information Type specially designed for tenure. Special tracking reports will be developed to monitor the status of faculty members as they progress through their various stages of tenure. We also plan to use Special Information Types to track sabbatical leave of absences.

Every year, Ithaca College must review all contracts for faculty employees and determine who will be reappointed for the following school year. This is also another major customization that we will develop that we can track the progress of these reappointments. We will discuss this process as well in the section below.

We will also be using multiple assignments at Ithaca College to track faculty and employees who must perform multiple duties throughout the year. It is common for an administrative staff member to teach classes when the need arises. In order to monitor position budgets, this employee will probably have two active assignments during the time he/she is teaching this class. Since the college does not want to have Oracle Payroll generate separate checks for multiple assignments, we plan to move all compensation to the primary assignment. We may need to design special Information elements for the secondary assignment in order to track all of the necessary information for the position budgets.

Position Control is a major issue for Ithaca College. With the exception of Advanced Benefits and the "new look and feel of 11i", the Position screen has the most added functionality. It is clear that Oracle has big plans for Position Control just by looking at the new date-tracked Position form. It includes many new fields, most that do nothing right now. Sadly, a position is still directly tied to an organization and a job title. This means that if an employee is promoted to a new job title, but still holds the same position, Oracle requires you to create a new position using the new job title. All attributes of the old position must be copied over to the new. There are new copy functions for positions to make this task easier. Oracle has stated that future releases will remove this restriction. This will present challenges for Ithaca College. Many times Ithaca College will fill an open professor position with part-time instructors if a full professor cannot be found. Ithaca College does not want to lose the original budgeting numbers for the approved position and want to track the part-time instructors that are temporarily filling this slot. We will attempt to solve this problem by constructing our position key flexfield with four segments. The final segment will track a sequence number. The main position record will have '00' in this fourth segment. If we must create a new position for the part time instructors, this new position will have the same first three segment values, but will have '01' in the sequence number. Any position reports we develop with summarize totals by the first three segments.

Some of the new fields on the Position screen include:

- Position Control (these are currently greyed out, promising new functionality later. Options are Open, Under Review, Approved Future Actions, and Temporarily Transferred)
- Position Type (Options include None, Pooled, Shared, Single Incumbent)
- Hiring Status (Options include Active, Deleted, Eliminated, Frozen, Proposed)

There are also three new regions on the Position screen to track Hiring Information, Work Terms, and Additional Detail. We are still in the “discovery phase” in determining what functionality is currently available and what will be delivered in the future Position Control update.

Since students make up approximately one third of all employees at Ithaca College, student employment is a major concern. Ithaca College’s current student information system tracks all demographic information for students. The legacy HRMS interfaces directly to the student information system so that the demographic data is not duplicated. As most of you know, student demographic data must reside in the Oracle HRMS tables if Oracle Payroll will be used to pay these employees. One of our major customization tasks will be to provide some integration between the existing student information system and Oracle HRMS. Our plan now is to provide some code attached to the Person screen that will attempt to retrieve student data from the legacy system when it detects that a student is being entered for the first time. We may then develop some audit reports to assist with keeping the two systems in sync.

Another major consideration for student employees is the management of Federal Work Study grants. The federal government supplies funds to the college to disperse to need-based students as wages for services provided. These funds must be carefully monitored to insure that they are properly used. The current legacy system accomplishes this task through a very cumbersome reallocation process that involves the payroll and student information systems. Our proposed solution to this requirement, once the legacy payroll system is retired, is to prepare a file from payroll run results that includes all student wages. The current student legacy system will be modified to accept this file. This system will accumulate all of the student wages records during the academic year. It can then track any funding limits imposed by the Federal Work Study award. It would then be able to determine if all Federal Work Study grants received from the government were properly awarded to eligible students. The current student information system already tracks the applications for financial need. Interestingly enough, Oracle is also seriously considering the option of tracking Federal Work Study grants through their proposed student information system.

The last area within Human Resources concerns compensation. Ithaca College was very interested in exploring the new options that 11i offers for salary surveys. The college participates in many higher education salary surveys. At the time of this writing, we have not explored these new features. The presentation will update our progress on this subject. Ithaca College, like many higher education organizations, allow their seasonal employees the option of receiving their salary over nine months or twelve months. Once again, this is a promised enhancement that should appear in a future 11i release. Depending on the timing, we will either use the yet unseen Oracle solution , or we will design the necessary Fast Formulas within Oracle Payroll that will allocate an employee’s salary based on a selection stored somewhere on the Assignment form. Also tied to this issue is the option to “prepay” the costs of their elected benefits over a nine month period.

Payroll

One of the biggest challenges we faced with Oracle Payroll was all of the special tax exemption allowances that higher education organizations enjoy. The current legacy system allows users to select tax exemption at the job title level. For example, student employees can automatically be set to be exempt from Social Security by merely setting a flag on the job title for student employees. All college employees are also exempt from Federal Unemployment (FUTA). We plan to experiment with the self adjust method options on the GRE record to satisfy this requirement. Other mass exemptions may require some custom library enhancements to the Tax Information screen.

Ithaca College does employ foreign nationals on campus. In order to adhere to all of the various treaties that United States has with various countries, Ithaca College purchased Windstar to track these treaties. Oracle has previously stated that they will support an interface to Windstar on a future 11i+ release. For the time being, Ithaca College is using Windstar in a standalone mode, and manually entering the necessary W4 changes on each employee’s Tax Information form.

Advanced Benefits

Probably the most exciting new feature to come to the Oracle HRMS family in recent years is the new module Advanced Benefits. Because Ithaca College offers its employees a flexible cafeteria style selection of benefit options, Advanced Benefits provided a strategic advantage over other software offerings. The college offers benefits including:

- Medical
- Dental
- Employee Life Insurance
- Dependent Life Insurance
- Accident Insurance
- Long-Term Disability
- Health Care Reimbursement Account
- Dependent Day Care Reimbursement Account

Although we are still in the learning phase of this new extensive module, our initial reaction is very good. We plan to use the system to automatically calculate the amount of flexible benefit credits that an employee can use when selecting his/her options. Ithaca College has some strict rules on how excess credits must be applied. Once again, Advanced Benefits will allow us to enforce these rules.

Ithaca College also plans to use the Self Service features of Open Enrollment. This will be a very visible enhancement to the entire campus workforce. There are standard communication letters that can be generated to alert employees on how to make their enrollment selections via the Web. Advanced Benefits allows you to track the progress of these open enrollments through reports and on-line views.

One improved process that Ithaca College will enjoy with Advanced Benefits is that the imputed income amount for domestic partners will now be calculated automatically based on selected made during open enrollment. This amount was manually calculated on the legacy system and prone to error. Using the Tax Withholding Rules screen Oracle Payroll can now tax this imputed income separately.

Self Service

One of the nice new additions of Release 11i is the introduction of a user's "home page". It is a website page that loads after a valid user has provided his/her logon id. The page is divided between the self service options and the application responsibilities. This one screen fully summarizes all of the tasks a user can perform. The familiar web interface will minimize the need for extensive training. Ithaca College plans to first implement the standard Self Service options for the basic demographic HR data. As stated above, they will also use the Self Service options for Benefits open enrollment.

Major Customizations and Extensions

Time Reporting

One of the main drivers for moving to a more "self-service" model, was the process of collecting time data and sending it to their payroll system. Currently, all time data must be manually written onto the Ithaca College Time Reporting Form (TRF). These forms are then sent to the Data Center, where they are keyed into the legacy payroll system. After several "brainstorming sessions" we have identified three different ways that Ithaca College must collect time data. The new solution for time reporting must be able to:

- Allow selected employees to “clock-in and clock out” using time collection hardware. All time collected should then be automatically transferred to Oracle Payroll for processing.
- Allow eligible employees to enter their timesheets weekly using a web-based system. These employees do not have to punch a time clock, but they must report total hours worked by work function. Also, exempt employees will use this option to record vacation and sick time taken.
- Allow supervisors to batch enter time for employees who do not have access to the Web. This is also a catch-all option that will provide an emergency method to quickly get time into the payroll system.

We will attempt to provide these solutions with purchased hardware and software. Currently, we are reviewing offerings from Kronos and Interpro. We may explore other solutions as well, if these proved to be deficient. The presentation will provide an update on our progress.

Reappointment Process

Every year, Ithaca College plans for the coming academic year with their reappointment process. They must determine the needed faculty staff to support the planned class offerings for the academic year. Reappointment packets are mailed to the appointees after being carefully reviewed by various offices throughout the campus. Our plan is to convert this entire review and approval process to Oracle Workflow.

The first task in the process was to diagram the existing procedures with Visio. By demonstrating the complexity of the existing reappointment process pictorially, we hoped to point out to the administration at Ithaca College that this process should be streamlined. Our proposed solution will start with information derived from the Budget office with a completed and approved salary budget. We will create a custom Oracle table that will extract data from the budget and HR and list all faculty who should be reappointed. HR will modify this table to update any known leaves of absences and sabbaticals. Next, this list will be forwarded by Workflow to the appropriate deans for approval. Results of the dean’s actions will be routed by Workflow back to the budget office for notification purposes. This will allow Budget to reconcile any differences between the original budget and our custom table. Once completed, the process will generate salary proposals through the APIs into the Oracle salary management screens. Workflow will generate notifications to the proposed faculty members. When accepted, the proposed salaries will be approved.

The current process requires mounds of paperwork that must be manually tracked through the various stopping points. By using Workflow, we hoped to streamline and control the progress of the various approvals. This may prove to be one of the greatest benefits of Project Parnassus.

New Hire/Vacancy Process

Ithaca College plans to extend the applicant tracking and position vacancy processes in Oracle to capture some additional approvals and checks. In order to fill an open position, a hiring supervisor must receive either an authorization to begin recruitment or, if a preferred candidate exists, a waiver to post. The review and approval process is currently a paper system in which a form is filled out and routed for approval. This new process will enhance and streamline the current practice to take advantage of Workflow.

When a dean or supervisor becomes aware of a vacancy, he/she will complete an Authorization for Recruitment / Waiver to Post form online. Based on the approval levels of the supervisor, this form will either be routed to the appropriate approver, or sent directly to HR through Workflow. HR will review for completeness and when approved, will route the form to the Budget office. Budget will insure that the salary is budgeted and if approved, will route the form to Affirmative Action. AA will review and make any necessary recommendations for the advertisement process. The form is finally routed back to HR to generate a vacancy within Oracle Applicant Tracking modules.

Once again, Workflow will be an integral tool to streamline a current process that tends to be inefficient and slow.

Summary

Our initial impression of 11i is quite positive. The new look and feel has many enhancements that make navigation much more intuitive. Old pull-down menus are now replaced with easy to see tabs. Pick lists are easily selected at the side of the effected fields. Icons across the top are smaller and a little harder to decipher. (We miss the Change Responsibility Hat!!)

Integration with Self Service and Workflow are big pluses in 11i. As stated above, Ithaca College plans to reap major process improvements with these two tools alone. The internet model, once installed, was easy to use. Clients only had to install the latest Jinitiator software and then start up their browser. The Oracle startup screen was simply a web site that users surfed to.

Leave plenty of time for initial installations and upgrades. There are many new technical issues to address and performance was initially a problem. Learning curves for some of the new modules, like Advanced Benefits, are quite steep. Patches are still a problem and require careful planning and testing.

We are excited about 11i. With the addition of the anticipated enhancements to Position Control and budgeting, the votes are in and the I's have it!