

# User groups drive ConnectND future

Teams representing ConnectND users will help develop recommendations and set priorities. NDUS user groups recently selected peers to represent them on the Inter-functional Team, which will be the primary source for generating changes to the ConnectND system.

**The NDUS Inter-functional Team holds its organizational meeting Sept. 28 in Valley City.** Members are:

**HRMS** -- Linda Fossum, Bismarck State College; Joann Kitchens, Lake Region State College; Cheryl Widman, University of North Dakota.

**Finance** -- Mark Anderson, Minot State University; Mark Lowe, Dickinson State University; Gary Wawers, North Dakota State University.

**Campus Solutions:** Brenda Wigness, Williston State University; and Monte Johnson, Dan Klein, and Marcia Pritchert, all of Valley City State University.

Initially, five will serve one-year terms and five for two years. Ex Officio voting members from the NDUS are systems directors Scott Mahar, Mick Pytlik and Teri Thorsen.

The functional representatives have been asked to seek input from all users and report back to campuses regularly. They will elect one of their members to chair the team.

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## Passing the oversight baton

**The NDUS Executive Oversight Committee has succeeded the Executive Steering Committee. Mayville State University President Pamela Balch, Oversight Committee chair, presents a plaque of appreciation to Dickinson State University President Lee Vickers, who chaired the Executive Steering Committee.**

Joining President Balch on the Executive Oversight Committee are President Joe McCann, Williston State College; Laura Glatt, vice chancellor; Phil North Dakota State University; Bob Gal- lager, Uni- versity of North Dakota; George Rauschen- berger, student representative; and Charlie Robertson, faculty representative. Grant Crawford, NDUS chief information officer, is a non-voting member.



**The NDUS Executive Oversight Committee meets Sept. 29 at Bismarck State College.**

# NDUS Help Desk handles fall traffic

As fall classes began, the NDUS Help Desk received and resolved a record number of calls, up to an estimated 90 percent of them relating to student account usernames and passwords. On the Monday before classes started, the NDUS Help Desk fielded 1,037 phone calls via the toll-free number (on the same day last year there were 280). That first week of classes, there were 3,000 calls.

Reasons given by students for not having the username/password varied. Some said they didn't receive them in their e-mail account, others said they didn't even have e-mail accounts, some just forgot to bring them and some had changed their password and forgotten it but hadn't set up the "forgot password" help.



The NDUS Help Desk is staffed in two locations, with the NDSU and the UND campus help desks. The

**Help Desk student worker Jacob Boomgaarden is joined by Scott Mahar and Angela Uhlenkamp of the student systems staff in helping students with username and password issues.**

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***Better 'red' than dead...***

## ***Processes can impact performance***

Student system usage historically is double each year during the mid-August to mid-September period. Although system capacity is now much greater than in the past, that period is still a crunch time necessitating careful communication, coordination and cooperation to avoid conflicts. Hello "red days," also known as critical calendar dates.

Student Administration asked users to observe most of the days during that time frame as red days, meaning they should avoid running major processes during peak periods. The restrictions are intended to maintain system performance and help everyone offer better service. Prior to ConnectND, red days were common on the old system that could accommodate far fewer users.

According to Scott Mahar, student information systems director, system users experience poor performance when trying to run a job that locks one of the main student system tables; once that happens, other users of that table get hung up. Running a third week report or disbursing financial aid are the kinds of jobs that cause this problem; others may also to a lesser degree. The user community was asked to refrain from running these big jobs (and reminded about the 'Red Days' of the old system). However, that explanation was unclear because all users didn't understand the connection between this performance problem and what they do.

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## State oversight panel looking ahead

Office of Management and Budget Director Pam Sharp is chairing the state government ConnectND Oversight Committee.

Joining her on the committee are state Chief Information Officer Curt Wolfe; Carol Olson, Department of Human Services; Dave Sprynczynatyk, Department of Transportation; Maren Daley, Job Service; Cory Fong, Tax Department; and Sandi Tabor, Attorney General's office.

The state management team has drafted a ConnectND strategic plan for state government that incorporates key initiatives and upcoming projects. The state Oversight Committee discussed project priorities and that plan on Aug. 31; members are continuing to review the document. Some of those overall project priorities included conducting a proof-of-concept process for PeopleSoft time and labor, implementing self-service open enrollment for the benefits function, upgrading to HRMS version 8.9 and enhancing Finance reporting capabilities.

State government is planning for user group meetings, from which will be created the inter-functional team representing the Finance and Human Resource Management Systems.

At a higher level, the ConnectND Board will address issues that cannot be resolved by the state and NDUS oversight committees. State government representatives to the ConnectND Board are Sharp, Wolfe and Daley. NDUS members of the ConnectND Board are campus presidents Pam Balch and Joe McCann, along with Laura Glatt, vice chancellor. NDUS CIO Grant Crawford is a non-voting member.



### *Help Desk continued from page 2...*

volume of activity was expected and each hired five student workers to bolster the small staffs. David Levenseller and John Underwood, Help Desk managers, rated the performance of the student workers and staff as outstanding. Although the student workers needed to know a lot of information and had a short time to be trained, they handled the deluge of phone calls with professionalism.

Scott Mahar, student information systems director, and three of his staff also pitched in at UND and NDSU to assist with the heavy and constant walk-up traffic of students needing username and password assistance.

NDUS Help Desk ticket volume declined dramatically after classes got underway. The daily call total had dropped to 300 by Thursday and to 200 the next week.

The next major traffic increase is expected in November when students register for spring classes. Levenseller and Underwood also anticipate the start of fall semester will again be a very busy time next year. They expect many of the students and faculty members will likely forget their username and/or password over the summer, and new students will need help.

### *Processes continued from page 2...*

The issues and concerns were clarified and questions answered during an informational telephone conference on Sept. 8. "We received some very good questions, hopefully provided some more answers and received excellent feedback on how to better address these situations," Mahar said.

No additional red days are anticipated until fee payment/ financial aid distribution time at the start of the spring semester.



**Jenna Parisien, a sophomore from Belcourt, observes as Jeremy Jones, a freshman from Grand Forks, logs on to the Campus Community portal the first time.**

## Students access ConnectND en masse

ConnectND became fully operational on all campuses this fall. The student, HRMS and finance systems are in daily use on every campus, and are now the “system of record.” Addressing a concern about handling the heavy load, ConnectND reached a major milestone when students returned for fall classes.

The Grand Forks Data Center reported that the student system was logged onto a total of 71,913 times the last day before fall classes. Obviously that indicates many users logged on multiple times during the day. Peak usage occurred at 2:20 p.m. when 1,600 users were on the student system simultaneously.

With the student system setting usage records, Data Center technicians worked long hours and closely monitored activity on all the servers to resolve issues and made adjustments before problems could escalate.

Upgrades to the student system in August produced performance improvements and also enabled the system to generate more data for resolving bottleneck issues. The system can well handle a normal load of activity—more than 2,000 processes are run daily. But slow performance and other problems occur when too many large jobs are attempted in the middle of the day. That’s why such activity had to be restricted and scheduled for less busy times.

## New features will enhance systems

With ConnectND fully operational on all campuses, staff can devote time to enhancing the systems:

- As the result of a decision made early on, ConnectND was implemented with the capability to calculate cumulative grade point averages. For some campuses, institutional GPA is also very important and a modification to the student system will enable that function. The PeopleSoft system is closer to providing this than was earlier thought so the modification will be less involved and won't cost as much to do. Institutional GPA is expected to be available in November.
- Student Administration is planning to have the Ad Astra room scheduling software in testing within the next month.
- Information learned during a Sept. 14 meeting with TouchNet and Oracle will enable Student Administration to plan when the TouchNet electronic payment system can be ready. Implementation was delayed because the PeopleSoft and TouchNet softwares, when combined, weren't able to handle a multi-campus situation.
- Student system staff is working on graduation audit, the official review of courses a student has taken and progress made toward meeting graduation requirements. The first step – automated transfer credit – has been set up for several of the campuses. Once that is completed for those remaining, staff will work with all the schools install the rest of the graduation audit program.
- The new NDUS Inter-Functional Team and the Executive Oversight Committee will discuss upgrades to PeopleSoft version 8.9 before an implementation schedule is finalized. The state is testing 8.9 this fall.
- Campus personnel have been trained and will be able to write PeopleSoft queries when the separate query environments are ready for use. Finance is ready, HRMS is nearly ready and the student system query environment will be there later this fall.

**At right, Chancellor Robert Potts poses with Student Administration staff members Paula Kurtz (she since has left), Charles Fjeld, Maria Saucedo, Mary Bergstrom and Sue Klava. Below are (left) Scott Mahar, Student Information Systems director, and Rich Lehn, ConnectND administrator.**



# HECN mainframe retirement nears

On September 30 the Higher Education Computer Network will shut down and retire the mainframe system that was replaced by ConnectND. Grant Crawford, NDUS chief information officer, notes that this marks the end of an era that spanned more than two decades. "It brings to an end the independence we gained by writing our own systems at the same time that ConnectND gives us far more functionality than we were ever going to be able to write for ourselves," he said.

"While we've gone from being masters of our own destiny to being captives of a corporate patch schedule, we can celebrate the richness of customer services and the comfort inherent in being part of a much larger user group," Crawford said in his recent CIO update. "Nevertheless, turning off the system is bittersweet because it means saying goodbye to some fine design, coded by excellent programmers."

Campus coordinators have been trained to use ImageNow document imaging software for capturing and preserving archived information. Representatives from various areas of campus operation worked with their campus colleagues and the HECN to identify the reports that are being retained.

**NDUS Chief Information Officer Grant Crawford, left, and Marv Hanson, Grand Forks Data Center manager, talk shop with NDUS Chancellor Robert Potts, center.**



## Other bits and bytes:

- Oracle executives are visiting North Dakota next month to hear about local needs and issues and discuss their plans and products.
- The Higher Education User Group, a not-for-profit organization, is a source of information from other higher education systems and campuses using PeopleSoft. The HEUG Web address is [www.heug.org](http://www.heug.org)

## About ConnectND

What is ConnectND?

ConnectND is the PeopleSoft's ERP system that replaced North Dakota's administrative computer systems. ConnectND serves as the administrative systems for the 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.

How was ConnectND organized?

Implementation was organized by module (functional area) into three state groups (Financial, Human Resources Managements Systems and Technical) and four higher education groups (Financial, Human Resources Management System and Technical).

*Comments and suggestions regarding this publication and ConnectND are welcome. You will find additional information on the ConnectND Web site [www.nodak.edu/connectnd](http://www.nodak.edu/connectnd) and on campus Web sites.*

*The NDUS Help Desk handles specific questions from campus users concerning ConnectND problems and requests: [www.help.nodak.edu/connectnd.html](http://www.help.nodak.edu/connectnd.html)*



Bob Jansen, NDUS Common Information Services  
Communications Coordinator 701-231-5805;  
[bob.jansen@ndus.nodak.edu](mailto:bob.jansen@ndus.nodak.edu)