

Kuali builds IT expertise and capacity

The expertise and productivity of Institutional IT teams participating in the development of the Kuali Student System has inspired the Kuali Foundation to fund an additional NWU team.

This means that a third of the teams working on this international project are from the NWU.

The university has been involved with Kuali Student for the past year. It is an international collaboration project for a student administration system developed by universities for universities.

The NWU is collaborating with parallel teams from several American and Canadian universities to develop the system, and has been working particularly closely with the University of Maryland for the past six months.

NWU TEAM PERFORMS

"I am very proud of our people's performance and the quality of their work," says Mr Attie Juyn, Chief Director: Information Technology. "The feedback from Maryland was very positive and now that the Kuali Foundation is funding the additional NWU team, two of the six teams working on Kuali Student are from the NWU."

Last year, the first NWU team helped with the development of a module for curriculum management. This module is currently being configured and implemented for the NWU's Institutional Committee for Academic Standards (ICAS) process, which has been mainly paper based until now.

CROSS-COUNTRY COLLABORATION

The NWU team also includes staff from OpenCollab, a Cape Town-based program development company that has helped with the development and maintenance of the NWU's student systems. The NWU recently bought the majority share of this company.

In January the NWU team started working on an enrolment module that incorporates several processes, from applications to the obtaining of qualifications. The development process should take approximately two years.

"The Kuali suite or package includes several open source systems, and the Kuali community

is growing fast. There were for instance more than 900 people from approximately 50 universities at a Kuali conference that we attended in November in Indianapolis," says Attie.

NEW FINANCIAL SYSTEM?

One of the other systems in the Kuali package is Kuali Financial System. NWU delegates visited Cornell and Michigan State universities at the end of 2011 to determine whether the system should be implemented at the NWU. The financial system had already been developed when the NWU joined Kuali.

Ms Elmarie de Beer, Chief Director: Finance, believes that it is a viable solution which will fit well into the NWU's broader Kuali strategy. The final recommendation to the Institutional Management is subject to a feasibility study that is currently underway and addresses identified gaps in more detail.

"Commercial products' licence fees and maintenance costs continue to rise. Apart from the fact that participation in Kuali saves licensing fees, the programs have been customised for universities whereas other systems were not developed specifically for universities," says Attie.

NWU TAKES THE LEAD

Although the NWU is still the only South African university participating in the development of Kuali Student, a number of other universities, including Stellenbosch and the University of Johannesburg, have also expressed interest.

"We are fortunate that our management is focused on innovation and that we can count on their support while we set up the platform for further development in South Africa," Attie says. "When the Kuali community starts to expand in South Africa, the NWU will be able to provide the necessary support and guidance to other South African universities."

He says the NWU's involvement with Kuali helps to develop and retain local expertise. "By giving South Africans the necessary exposure and developmental opportunities, the NWU not only helps to build internal capacity, but also to retain expertise in the country. We are already seeing the benefits of the first Kuali-based system that is in production."



Campus beauty shines in Korea

At the end of September last year, Ms Marlie Jonker, the Potchefstroom Campus's Miss Campus 2011, was elected Miss SA Campus – the most beautiful female student in the country.

From 28 November to 18 December she represented South Africa at the World Miss University 2011 in Seoul, South Korea.

Last year, Marlie was also appointed editor of the Potchefstroom Campus student newspaper, *Wapad*, for the 2011/2012 term.

She studied BA Communication and this year is registered for a postgraduate diploma in Management.