

## APPLICATION FOR THE OURA INNOVATION AWARD

The Ontario Universities Registrar's Association (OURA) concerns itself with academic administration including, but not limited to, admissions, registration, examinations, scheduling, transcripts, systems, records, calendars, scholarships and awards, secondary school liaison, and other activities or undertakings that may be deemed appropriate to OURA. This award program is designed to recognize, reward and share university achievements in improving the quality and reducing the cost of academic administration as described above.

One award is available each year and is valued at \$5,000 to be given in the form of an endowment to fund a student scholarship at the winning institution.

### APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Complete the attached application form. Answers should be concise, relevant and provides clear evidence of measurable outcomes. In addition to the application form, applicants are encouraged to submit supporting documentation such as project briefs and project summaries that provide an overview of the development and implementation process.

### SELECTION CRITERIA

Five categories are used to evaluate submissions for the Innovation Awards. The scoring factors and point values for each category are as follows.

1. **Portability:** the potential for use of the technique at other institutions.
2. **Originality:** the originality and uniqueness of the idea as applied to higher education.
3. **Quality impact:** the extent of the impact of improvements in quality of service as seen by the end user, or in working conditions as seen by staff.
4. **Productivity impact:** the extent of the impact of the improvements in productivity. The size of the institution will be taken into account where the improvements generate financial savings or increased revenue.
5. **Involvement:** the extent of the involvement of the entire institutional community. Consultation beforehand with staff and users, faculty and students, and broad acceptance of the changes will be taken into account.

One of the main objectives of the award is to encourage the transfer of knowledge and the dissemination of information. All applications received and contact information will be published on the OURA web site. In addition abstracts of the winning project will be distributed through the OURA Newsletter and list serve.

# **BROCK UNIVERSITY**

## **PROJECT: ELECTRONIC ACADEMIC CALENDAR SUBMISSION/REVISION PROCESS**

**Submitted by:** Barb Davis, Registrar and Gloria Gallagher, Associate Registrar

**1. Provide a summary of the project/activity. Indicate which area(s) of academic administration benefit from this idea.**

Brock University's Registrar's Office, in partnership with ITS/Web Development have developed a web based system to facilitate the Academic Calendar Revision Submission process. The intent of this project was to improve the annual process by which the Academic Calendar is developed and produced for all stakeholders\* involved in the process (administrative and academic), and in particular to alleviate or address:

- a) The requirement to download calendar copy for revision;
- b) The need to e-mail revised calendar copy for submission or editing;
- c) The need to "keep track" of the most current revised copy;
- d) The manual handling of track changes throughout the revision process;
- e) The challenges encountered with moving Senate approved revisions to the on-line WebCal.

The new system is designed to make available, via a web server, a copy of the current academic calendar for revision and allows authorized individuals to update unit information and store changes on this site.

The system introduces:

- a) Electronic signoff and lockout that disables the document from re-writeable to read only;
- b) Automatic track changes function ability;
- c) Logging of all editing at every level;
- d) Submission status bar at all security levels;
- e) Elimination of up/down loads;
- f) System supported Calendar Copy regulations.

For a more "full flavour" of how the initiative has changed prior processes see Appendix I attached.

(\* includes Administrative Assistants, faculty who have a role in calendar development, Chairs/Directors, Associate Deans, Deans, members of Senate and Senate Committees, Graduate Studies, administrative staff in the Registrar's Office involved with calendar development, and other administrative units who have responsibility for calendar content updates.)

**2. Explain the originality and uniqueness of this idea as it related to higher education.**

While we understand that there are now potentially a small number of "canned packages" that could be used for academic calendar building, no such package existed at the time we conceived the project and none is as comprehensive or specific in scope as the one we have developed in-house. In presenting our early stage of the project at OURA 2009, it was clear that what we were developing held interest and compatibility to processes (and challenges) currently experienced at other universities.

**3. Describe how this idea has improved the quality of service as seen by the end-user (students and/or staff).**

Appendix I compares prior process at each user level and the challenges experienced to improvements that the new design provides at each user level to address these challenges, and further illustrated on the workflow chart in Appendix II.

We are in the first year(cycle) of actual user implementation, and have focused on ensuring success of the process for the academic side of the house involved in developing and approving the academic calendar submission for individual departments and programs (includes Administrative Assistants, Chairs and Directors, Associate Deans and Deans). While not without its 'hiccups' overall the system has been enthusiastically embraced. The automatic track changes, elimination of downloads and manual controls have made the process easier and more efficient for these users in developing their submissions. We have been encouraging feedback along the way (see question 5 for more detail on the rollout process), and have received comments like:

- "This project was a huge undertaking but the new system worked extremely well, thanks to all of your hard work and effort. It is so much more efficient."
- "Even though there were some glitches in the first year of running the new program, I can see how it is going to save an enormous amount of time for we administrative assistants let alone the whole group involved in UPC. We appreciate all of your hard work and efforts."

The users like the design, and they want more. We have received requests for enhancements that we will incorporate into a phase two of the project design.

**4. How has this idea improved productivity and/or cost savings/revenue at the institution. To ensure productivity and cost savings are being adequately compared the demographic composition of the institution can be considered.**

This process will yield both improved productivity and cost savings to the institution for all stakeholders in the process. While we have rolled this out primarily for academic "chapters" of the calendar, the web based design is also usable for the "administrative" chapters. Our 2009 Undergraduate Calendar had 56 academic unit "chapters" and 46 administrative "chapters". The design is also being used to produce the Graduate Calendar, and is compatible with their submission approval process (which differs somewhat from the undergraduate process).

For academic units, eliminating much of the manual controls and challenges with downloads and movement of the submissions through the process creates a tremendous savings to the time spent especially at the designate level (usually administrative assistants) in compiling the original submission and 'chasing' it through the process. It also allows an earlier opportunity to start on their submission, if desired, than was previously the case. There are benefits to workload issues and tangible savings in printing costs. Deans also have the capacity to see at a glance where their departments/centres are with respect to completion of submissions and have the capacity to make all approvals with an on-line sign off. There are lock-out controls and design controls which make the edit and formatting process more efficient at the editorial end (who are primarily Registrar's Office staff).

**5. Discuss the involvement of the entire institutional community in the implementation of the idea. This can include, but is not limited to, consultations with students, staff, and faculty and broad acceptance of the idea being implemented.**

We were very conscious of the need for buy-in at all levels towards launching the design. Coupled with this was the need in the development process, to seek input and feedback at various stages from all user levels to ensure that our design concept fit their needs and work processes, and to engage in consultation.

At various points in development, individuals from the Senate Undergraduate Program Committee, the Graduate Program Committee, administration, and faculty were asked for input on stages of the design concept. In addition, overviews of the project were introduced and/or discussed with the Deans, Associate Deans, and relevant other Senate program subcommittees. We also identified key users at the administrative assistant level to test out the design prior to launch, to provide feedback and to become 'fans' in supporting our impending roll-out.

In June 2009, we held several two-hour training sessions for administrative assistants, Chairs, Associate Deans, Deans or any individual who would be using the system. These were exceptionally well attended and positively received. We provided a manual of user documentation and had two individuals in our office available for additional training and troubleshooting. Refresher training was also offered in September. In

addition, we shared responses to troubleshooting issues and modifications with user groups through regular e-mail updates.

We intend to do a full post-mortem at the completion of this first user cycle, involving stakeholders at each user level.

**6. Describe the potential for using this project/activity at another institution. Discuss any possible challenges that could arise.**

Since this is a web based system, there is potential for application through any institution. As noted above, we gave an early look at the design to colleagues at OURA 2009. It was clear from that session that general processes were not all that different to ours, and that institutions were facing similar challenges. There was a great deal of interest in our system and we were asked to do a follow-up session at OURA 2010 to discuss our progress and current stage of development/implementation. We have also submitted a proposal to present at ARUCC in June 2010. We intend to explore market potential for our initiative once we have gone through full implementation at our own institution.

**7. Is there any additional information, not provided already, that would assist the selection committee with their decision?**

If additional detail is required on the technical aspects of the design or the visual look of the process screens, the user documentation manual could be provided to the selection committee.

Return application to Heather Brown, OURA Executive Vice-President, [heatherb@nipissingu.ca](mailto:heatherb@nipissingu.ca) or Nipissing University, 100 College Drive, North Bay, Ontario, P1B8L7 by **January 15, 2010**