



Workgroup on Extramural Training Systems (WETS)

Date: October 14, 2004
Time: 10:00 a.m.–11:20 a.m.
Location: Rockledge 1, Room 3502
Advocates: Barbara Huffman, Rick Ikeda, (Dr. Walter Schaffer)

Next Meeting: November 16, 2004, 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., Rockledge 1, Room 3502

Action items:

1. (Linda Katzper) Prepare a list of key people to participate in a brainstorming session on how an End-to-End Training System, integrating X-Train and the TA (Training Activities) module, can be developed, given the planned schedule for converting TA from a client-server application to a J2EE Web-based platform beginning in January. Compile the names of the people for the meeting and circulate the list to key group members.
2. (Linda, David Turner) Present the workflow plan to the group at the next WETS meeting on Nov. 16.
3. (Walter Goldschmidts) Look for someone to replace Barbara Huffman as an advocate for the WETS group.

Developing an end-to-end system

Walter Goldschmidts told the group that \$1.8 million has been made available to develop the long envisioned end-to-end training system that would integrate X-Train and TA. He described this as a phenomenal opportunity to develop the kind of training system that had been planned but put off for years. Since TA is scheduled to be converted from a client-server application to a J2EE web-based platform beginning in January, he questioned how that conversion would play into the development of an End-to-End Training System. Walter expressed concern with converting TA to a web-platform without building an End-to-End Training System at the same time. He said it was analogous to renovating a bathroom when the house is going to be demolished; it did not make sense. Linda Katzper stressed that they would have to go through with the conversion of TA to a web application because the TA client-server applications are scheduled to be turned off by September 2005. After much discussion, members agreed that it would be best to begin work on the End-to-End Training System parallel to the conversion; once the conversion was done, the work done on the end-to-end system would be turned over to the developers. Walter suggested bringing together a group of key people in the next few weeks to brainstorm ways of making this end-to-end system a reality. Walter said both Wally Schaffer and he had lobbied Israel Lederhendler to disburse the money a year before it was due because they felt they were losing traction on X-Train and TA; and such an opportunity should not be lost. Rick suggested that Linda compile a list of people for the meeting and circulate the list to key group members.

Action: (Linda Katzper) Linda will prepare a list of people to participate in a brainstorming session on how an end-to-end training system, integrating X-Train and the TA (Training Activities) module, can be developed., given the planned schedule of converting TA from a client-server application to a J2EE Web-based platform beginning in January. Compile a list of people for the meeting and circulate the list to key group members.

Updates

X-Train—David Turner reported that the first of the three iterations in the redesign of X-Train is complete. X-Train is an NIH eRA Commons Electronic Trainee Activities System that allows program directors and trainees from institutions with National Research Service Award training grants to transmit confidential personal data electronically to the NIH.

The first iteration deals with the capability of creating, amending and processing appointments. All the business documents have gone through the review process and handed over to developers to start development. David stated that work has begun on iteration two, dealing with the processing of terminations.

Linda stated that work has begun on a workflow plan. Walter asked if there was a timeline for the workflow plan and if it would be brought to the group for review. David stated that they are working with Marcia Hahn and Pamela Mayer on the workflow and they would try to have it ready to present at the next WETS meeting.

Action: (Linda, David) Present the workflow plan to the group at the next WETS meeting on Nov. 16.

TA conversion to J2EE—TA is one of many modules slated to be converted from a client server application to the J2EE Web-based platform during the second phase beginning in January. The conversion is expected to take four to five months, followed by eight weeks of testing and then a pilot run probably before September. There will be a time period during the conversion when certain changes to TA will not be allowed. Linda stated that it was her understanding that changes to the user interface will not be permitted while back-end changes will probably be allowed. The TA that will emerge from the conversion is expected to look much like the current client-server version of TA. There will be minor changes, such as tab buttons replacing the drop down menu bar. While TA is undergoing conversion, users will continue to use the current version of TA. Linda stated that between one to three users will be involved in helping during the analysis and design phase to refine the user interface, review test plans, act as a resource in answering questions about the application and test the final J2EE version for defects.

Changes in TA

Linda outlined a series of changes to TA that were either made recently, or currently being done, or are scheduled to be done in the near future. Users will be informed of these changes.

Recent changes:

- Users were encountering problems in terminating fellowships, so a data sweep was conducted to enable them to terminate these records. This sweep does not correct the software glitch that is causing the problem.
- Change in address edit from red to yellow for Commons users, so these records could be terminated.

Changes being worked on by maintenance contractor:

- Recalculate payback status and balance procedure when LRP dates change.
- Disable user entry of Loan Repayment Program (LRP) in TA/Payback User Interface, because it is not working properly.
- Disable user entry of DSF (Discipline, Specialty and Field) codes. The FOT (Field Of Training) codes have replaced the DSF codes that were supposed to have been phased out.
- Fix rounding problems on Snapshot report.
- Adding FOT codes to appointments.

Changes to be made soon:

- Permanently fix termination button problems so no data sweeps are necessary.
- Add lines to payback balance worksheets to reflect underlying calculations.

Open Discussion

Huffman retiring—Rick noted that WETS is losing Barbara Huffman, one of three WETS meeting advocates, to retirement. He suggested that Walter Goldschmidts look for her replacement. Since Huffman is a grants management specialist, Rick suggested asking Mike Loewe, advocate for the Grants Management Lead Users Group, for ideas on who should be picked as an advocate in place of Huffman. Walter stated that he had also asked Wally Schaffer for suggestions.

Action: (Walter Goldschmidts) **Look for someone to replace Barbara Huffman as an advocate for the WETS group.**

Low meeting turnout—Rick noted that the low turnout at this meeting was mostly due to the fact that some regular members were now employees of the newly formed DEAS (Division of Extramural Activities Support). DEAS also had a meeting that conflicted with this WETS meeting. Rick suggested that Walter approach DEAS and request one representative on the WETS group or request Wally to recommend a nominee. Walter stated that if it was absolutely critical that answers were needed to some training module questions, WETS could hold a specialized meeting and bring in key people who are not even standing members to deliberate on issues and provide input.

Attendees

Freese, Michelle (OD)

Goldschmidts, Walter (OD)

Ikeda, Richard (NIGMS)

Katzper, Linda (OER)
Subramanya, Manju

(LTS/PCOB)
Turner, David (OER)

Venable, Beverly (OD)