Notes on Terminology

We use “continuing education” throughout this proposal as an umbrella term encompassing all non-credit course offerings. It covers a variety of related learning terminology, including professional education, lifelong learning, community education, executive education, professional development, workforce training, career training, personal enrichment programs, and extended academic programs. These types of courses often fulfill requirements for continuing education units (CEU), continuing education credit (CEC), professional development units (PDU), continuing legal education (CLE), continuing medical education (CME) and/or professional learning units (PLU).

Project Description

Facilitate a pilot to offer online a John Cook School of Business Emerson Leadership Institute continuing education course through the School for Professional Studies’ Center for Workforce and Organizational Development continuing education system. We propose to enhance the Center’s continuing education system by implementing two new integrations with current systems. This integration will allow (1) the use of the existing learning management system (i.e., Blackboard) to be used as an effective tool to deliver continuing education and (2) the formal documentation of continuing education course completion within the student information system (i.e., Banner). The Emerson Leadership Institute’s participation as the pilot department is contingent upon approval of the proposal by the Dean of the John Cook School of Business, Mark Higgins.

Project Summary

Since Saint Louis University (SLU) has already invested in technologies that can be used to enroll, deliver and record continuing education, this project will focus on two efforts to expand the capabilities of existing solutions. The first effort will be focused on leveraging Blackboard to offer a course previously developed by the Emerson Leadership Institute (ELI). To effectively do so requires the integration of Blackboard with Destiny Connect, the continuing education registration system used by the Center for Workforce and Organizational Development (CWOD). The second effort will be focused on creating an automated process to allow ELI to efficiently transcript course completion in Banner, SLU’s student information system (SIS). Both efforts are required to effectively deliver and transcript continuing education using virtual learning technologies.

With the successful completion of these efforts and the pilot project, SLU would be capable of providing an integrated, centralized, information technology infrastructure that would offer process, registration, and documentation efficiencies for all SLU academic units. Today, multiple academic units across SLU purchase and maintain their own isolated systems to offer continuing education courses and programs. This often leads to different colleges, schools, and programs cobbling together their own individual solutions that rely heavily on manual data entry and work-around solutions. This has led to costly inefficiencies, redundancies and fragmented data stores.

The desired outcome from this pilot program will be a system through which an interested student can purchase and enroll in a continuing education course and then, within minutes, have access to that
course and its materials. At present, this level of efficiency does not exist. For example, in order for the ELI to present course material through Blackboard it takes five steps: (1) ELI builds a TouchNet MarketPlace store to collect payment and registrations, (2) ELI downloads registration information from MarketPlace, (3) ELI manually creates student applications in Banner, (4) ELI creates a course in Banner and (5) ELI manually registers individuals in Banner courses. The first proposed effort reduces these five steps to a single step of ELI working with CWOD to create a course in Destiny. Once the course is in Destiny, individuals can purchase, enroll, and access Blackboard materials in the same location with no interaction from ELI. This eliminates the need for the student to receive a SLU email address and Banner ID in order to access MySLU to access Blackboard. The second proposed effort will allow records to be batch loaded into Banner in order to document successful completion, thus eliminating the manual processes that are currently required to download, cross-reference, and export completion records into Banner.

**Expected Timeline for Implementation**

The proposed project is comprised of four phases that require an estimated total time of 3-6 months depending on internal and external resource availability. Phases 2 and 3 are dependent on phase 1, but phase 2 and 3 can be run in parallel since different partners will be working with Information Technology Systems (ITS) teams on different systems. Phase 2 requires ELI and CWOD to work with the ITS LMS team. Phase 3 requires the Office of the University Registrar (OUR) to work with the ITS Banner team. Phase 4 is the documentation of the processes and recommendations.

**Phase 1: Discovery and documentation phase (1 month)**
- ITS, CWOD, ELI and Destiny Solutions collaborate to detail the integration requirements and any needed enhancements to the Destiny Connect Framework in order to facilitate (1) the integration with Blackboard and (2) allow for the extraction of program completion information.

**Phase 2: Course pilot phase (1 month)**
- ITS completes Blackboard integration outlined in phase 1.
- ELI working with CWOD offers the pilot continuing education course through Destiny.

**Phase 3: Academic history phase (2 months)**
- ITS, OUR and SSD Axiom collaborate to build a mechanism to load completion records, from the data extract outlined in phase 1, into the academic history section of Banner.
- OUR loads completion information from ELI into Banner through Axiom.

**Phase 4: Process improvement and documentation (1 month)**
- ELI, CWOD and OUR document procedures and lessons learned in order to recommend improvements and highlight gaps discovered through the system integrations and pilot program.

**Positive Financial Impact on SLU**

Through streamlining the technology infrastructure, SLU will be able to offer a more efficient process for (1) developing continuing education programming that can be offered virtually and on demand, (2) ensuring that interested students have timely access to these learning offerings, and (3) documenting successful completion of all continuing education programming in a centralized, University-supported system. It will also eliminate the need for individual units to fund their own decentralized systems.
Additionally, working with existing vendors to extend or integrate currently deployed systems may prove to be less costly. By leveraging the current LMS, the current SIS and the continuing education system used by the Center for Workforce and Organizational Development, this project creates opportunities to offer programs without purchasing new systems. The proposed integrated system will allow units offering continuing education to discontinue using their homegrown systems and labor intensive processes in favor of a more efficient, SLU-branded system.

**Positive Non-Financial Impact on SLU**

Offering CE programs and courses within a single system provides opportunities for cross-marketing across the broader university - for alumni, the general public, and students currently enrolled in both undergraduate and graduate academic programs.

Because of the proposed efficiencies the institution will drastically reduce the potential for mistakes caused by exhaustive manual processes, which ultimately result in poor customer service experiences. Additionally, a more automated system will expedite registration, payment, and course access. This improved customer experience will produce a more positive impression of SLU and its ability to meet the continuing education needs of alumni, the community, and current students.

The Office of the University Registrar is the central academic record keeper at SLU. Many former CE course participants call the Registrar, to provide proof of their CE course to an existing or future employer. By using Banner to store this information, it allows the Office of the University Registrar to serve these individuals immediately without passing their phone calls and emails around the institution. A centralized system will also allow SLU to more effectively gather reporting data on the number of continuing education courses offered, the number of CE participants in those courses, and the overall revenue generated by CE programming.

**Alignment with Jesuit Mission and Strategic Plan of the University**

The Jesuit mission espouses educating the whole person—mind, body, and spirit—which does not end once a student graduates from college. A strong continuing education program will enable SLU to keep educating the whole person throughout his or her entire life and across a diverse array of professional pursuits. We will shape leaders and equip them with current skill sets and competencies they need to make a positive impact on the world.

*Initiative Four: Being an Innovator and Entrepreneur in All That We Do*

Goal 2 under this initiative specifies that the University will “adopt and promote new models of educational design, program delivery, and market development, especially insofar as these paradigms address current challenges to the traditional higher-education business model....” Objective 2.1 under this goal specifically states that SLU will offer opportunities to “adult and executive learners and promote lifelong learning as integral components of our education model.” Objective 2.6 further challenges the University to “...expand our educational reach by becoming a learning partner for organizations with differentiated employee development needs.” Providing a technology infrastructure for SLU departments to use for continuing education, will increase the opportunities for our community members to have a SLU educational experience.
Goal 4 under this initiative calls for establishing and maintaining systems across the University that are characterized by “transparency, effectiveness, efficiency, and responsiveness in revenue generation, allocation, cost containment, and accountability.” Under this goal, Objective 4.3 further specifies that we “recognize effective interdisciplinary, interdepartmental, and intercollegiate efforts by establishing a system of meaningful incentives for such work.” As previously mentioned, there are multiple technology systems at SLU for continuing education which utilize monetary and human resources to support these redundant systems. Through collaboration on one University technology infrastructure, we will foster such interdisciplinary collaboration by creating an integrated framework for shared resources.

Goal 6 under initiative five challenges us to “strengthen our internal and external communications capabilities and effectiveness.” Objective 6.1 under this goal specifically challenges the University to “support interdisciplinary and inter-campus cohesiveness...by improving our internal communications capacity to celebrate and promote collaboration across the University.” Beyond increasing revenue, having a University wide technology infrastructure will create a more efficient interdisciplinary, interdepartmental means of conducting continuing education at SLU. This will strengthen our internal and external communication related to developing, marketing, delivering, and supporting continuing education programs and content.

**Required Resources**

This proposal is requesting $35,000 for the following pieces:

- $20,000 to hire Destiny Solutions to perform a campus engagement titled “Integrations Discovery & System Definition”. This estimate is based on having a $1,500 buffer on a $18,500 statement of work (100 hours at $185 per hour).
- $5,000 to cover the cost of ELI using Destiny for the pilot CE course.
- $10,000 to hire SSD Axiom to build a bridge to load completion records from various continuing education systems into the academic history section of the SIS. This estimate is based on needing the discovery portion of the above campus engagement. Ongoing annual maintenance is 20% of original cost and will be requested as part of the Office of the University Registrar annual budget.

This proposal is also requesting two nonfinancial resources

- ITS project management resources in order to keep project on schedule and coordinate the various ITS resources.
- Marketing and Communication resources to create a continuing education presence on the new slu.edu.

**Potential Obstacles**

Currently, Information Technology Services does not have dedicated support for the continuing education platform, Destiny Solutions.

There are concerns that the existing budget/revenue processes will discourage academic units from participating in the shared solution that will be documented after the pilot of the ELI CE course.