ROCKY MOUNTAIN PANORAMA

The Newsletter of The Rocky Mountain Association for Institutional Research

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RMAIR 1996-97 OFFICERS

President — Diane Mun tal
Senior Analyst
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
4505 Maryland Parkway
Las Vegas, NV 89154 (702) 895-3771

Vice President — Hans P. L’Orange
Assistant Director
University of Colorado at Boulder
Campus Box 15
Boulder, CO 80309 (303) 492-8631

Past President — Kenneth Brown
Assistant Research Scientist
Office of Academic Planning
University of Arizona, Admin. 116
Tucson, AZ 85721 (520) 621-5715

Secretary — Jacquelyn Stirm
Director of Research & Records
Development Office, Regis College
3333 Regis Boulevard
Denver, CO 80211-1099

PANORAMA

Coordinator — Nelle Moore
Director, Institutional Research, Grant Development and Planning
San Juan College, 4601 College Blvd.
Farmington, NM 87402 (505) 399-0438

Editor — Wendy Miley
Research Specialist, Sr.
Decision & Planning Support
University of Arizona, Admin. 116
Tucson, AZ 85721 (520) 621-5717

Publisher — Diane Mun tal
(see address above)

INTERCOM — A Message from the President

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I hope that you all are in good health and good spirits. The transition from the holiday season to the reality of the new year is not always an easy one -- there are all those New Year resolutions to be kept, the master piles on your desk and, for many, the opening of the legislative session -- all of which brings us crashing back to reality. The good news is that the AIR Forum, is right around the corner. This year's Forum, to be held at the Walt Disney Resort in Lake Buena Vista, Florida from May 18-21, promises to be exciting and thought-provoking. The theme of the conference, "Performance Indicators: Defining Measures That Matter," will undoubtedly provide us with valuable information for carrying out those New Year resolutions concerning master pile reduction in the office. And it will give us the opportunity to meet new colleagues, renew friendships, seek solace and find solutions.

Speaking of AIR, congratulations goes to past president Denise Sokol (CU - Denver), who was elected to the Nominations Committee. And for those newcomers to RMAIR, don't forget that one of our own, Susan Jones (University of Wyoming) is chair of the Newcomers Committee, as well as John Porter, who is treasurer and Sarah Lindquist who is chair of the Membership Committee. As is the custom, there will be a Newcomers Open House on Saturday evening, so if you are feeling overwhelmed, or just want to attach faces to names, please attend.

Also coming up is the 1997 RMAIR conference in Cloudcroft, New Mexico. Mark your calendars for October 15-17. As you all know, two of New Mexico State
FROM THE EDITOR

As the new legislative session gets underway across the Rocky Mountain region, our Institutional Research offices will be busy keeping up with internal and external ad hoc demands for information. It's good to know there is some respite. The preliminary programs have been sent for the upcoming AIR Forum in Lake Buena Vista, Florida, to be held this May -- the 18th through the 21st. The plenary sessions and presentations will definitely be of value to IR practitioners, as legislatures and governing boards demand accountability and request more information to assess the quality of our higher education institutions.

If you are going to AIR's forum in May, don't forget RMAIR's SIG meeting. The meeting is on Monday afternoon at 12:15 in the Fantasia E room. Diane Muntal, RMAIR president, has a full agenda set for us.

For more info about AIR, visit http://www.fsu.edu/~air/home.htm.

The next RMAIR conference from October 15-17, 1997, at Cloudcroft, New Mexico, will be here before you know it. Fred Lillibridge and Larry Beck are the local arrangement chairs, and Mark Chisholm is the program chair. Do you have a paper, demonstration or panel discussion topic that you would like to present in New Mexico -- give it some thought?

For more info on the 1997 RMAIR conference, visit http://www.nmsu.edu/~RMAIR/. Recent comings and going with state reporters for Panorama include:

Pat Fay of Aims Community College has recently accepted a faculty position at Aims and will no longer be able to fill the role as state reporter for Colorado. Not only do I want to express my appreciation for the great job Pat has done; kudos to Pat for finding a replacement for Colorado. I would like to welcome aboard Mark Klinger from Pikes Peak Community College, the newly recruited state reporter for Colorado.

I would also like to welcome aboard Renee Tihen of the University of Wyoming who has volunteered to be Wyoming's state reporter. Renee will be taking over for Sue Koller, University of Wyoming, and Mike Dover formerly from Northwest Community College. Thank you Sue and Mike for your years of service and many contributions you both have made to RMAIR and Panorama.

Look forward to seeing you all of you in May!

RMAIR Listserv by Fred Lillibridge, List Manager

A RMAIR listserv has been established on an INTERNET node at New Mexico State University.
Members and other interested individuals can subscribe to this public list by sending the e-mail message SUB RMAIR (your name) to this address:
LISTSERV@NMSU.EDU

You will be notified by e-mail after you are added to the RMAIR Listserv.

Once you have successfully subscribed, you can communicate with all RMAIR list subscribers by addressing an e-mail message to the following address: RMAIR@NMSU.EDU

The command to SIGnoff (cancel your subscription to) the list is similar. You should use the same account you used to subscribe. Send the e-mail message SIG RMAIR to: LISTSERV@NMSU.EDU.

If you want a list of other RMAIR Listserv users, you can send the e-mail message REV RMAIR to: LISTSERV@NMSU.EDU. This will allow you to REView the list.

If you have any questions or have difficulty subscribing to the listserv, please contact Fred Lillibridge at New Mexico State University - Alamogordo, INTERNET: flilibr@nmsu.edu, TELEPHONE: (505)439-3624 OR FAX: (505)439-3643.

NEWS FROM THE STATES

ARIZONA
by Carol Diem

AZ AIR

The Arizona Association for Institutional Research will be hosting its Eighth Annual Conference on Thursday, April 3, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., in downtown Tucson at Pima Community College's new campus location. The conference theme follows with this years AIR forum theme, "Performance Indicators -- Defining Measures that Matter". The presentations on the agenda will be both timely and informative, and there is time allotted to "breakout sessions" for two-year and four-year institutions so all conference participants can discuss local institutional research issues. AZ AIR hopes you will be able to join them in April.

Arizona Board of Regents Central Office

A new model for community college articulation, which allows students transferring from a community college to be able to transfer blocks of credit to baccalaureate degrees, was adopted by the Board in November. A prototype of an automated course equivalency guide that should aid the process for transfers is now available on the Internet at http://www.public.asu.edu/cas.

Following a presentation regarding some of the characteristics of nonresident tuition waiver recipients, Regents have changed Board policy to require that undergraduate nonresident tuition waiver recipients be required to maintain higher grade point averages and that they perform community service.

The Board reached a consensus on key issues regarding post-tenure review for faculty. The new policy provides a system for annual reviews for tenured faculty and adds unsatisfactory performance over a period of time as a reason for dismissal. The Board states that teaching will be given the same consideration as research and public service for tenure and promotions.

The first annual "Report Card" of the Arizona University was issued on February 13, 1997. This allows for the assessment of the performance of Arizona Universities in four categories: (a) undergraduate education, (b) quality of instruction, (c) excellence and innovation, and (d) utilization of resources. Twenty indicators were used to assess performance in these categories. On the basis of these indicators, the Regents approved assessments of university performance, ranging from "Needs Improvement" to "Superior."

A report regarding administrative costs as a percentage of total expenditures was provided to the
Board in January, and administrative costs will in the future be reviewed by the Board annually. Administrative costs as a percentage of total expenditures have declined from 8.5% in FY 1989 to 8.1% in FY 1995.

A senate bill has been introduced that allows the state's community colleges to offer upper-division courses and baccalaureate degree programs in partnership with the state's public universities. The Regents have voted to oppose this bill.

Arizona State University by Melinda Gebel

As we nostalgically look back over 1996, we can safely say that ASU enjoyed a very productive year, with a record enrollment of 47,051 across all three campuses. Minority enrollment continued to climb and the honorable Honors College enjoyed its largest enrollment yet with 1,557 students. The academic achievements of undergraduates included two Marshall Scholars, a Fulbright Grant winner, six Woodrow Wilson Fellows, and three Goldwater Scholars. In addition, ASU was one of only 17 institutions in the nation to be named a Truman Scholarship Honor Institution. And to top it all off, the ASU Sun Devils played for the national championship in their second trip to the Rose Bowl. They did not leave with roses but did leave with a PAC-10 championship and a very impressive 11-0 record for the regular season.

Other highlights from the past year include the first graduating class from ASU East, which now houses the Schools of Technology and Agribusiness. President Lattie Coor unveiled his blueprint for the future entitled "The University for the Next Century," which focuses on continuous change, diversification, and selective investments for creating a prototypical model for the metropolitan research university of the future. Advancements in high technology continued to be a priority for the university as evidenced by several multimillion dollar NSF awards and the addition of new tenants in the ASU Research Park, which is strengthening its collaboration with academic departments on campus. So what impact has all of this had? A survey conducted this fall of the greater Phoenix area opinion leaders indicated strong community approval of the direction in which ASU is moving, particularly with regard to an improvement in the quality of education and the university's positive impact on the economic development of the community.

Yes, 1996 was a busy year but much more awaits us ahead. In addition to an on-going emphasis on undergraduate education, ASU enters the new year with legislative priorities that focus on faculty and staff salaries and performance-based pay, addition of staff to keep up with enrollment growth, continued development of ASU West and East, and stronger partnerships with industry. Here's to 1997!

University of Arizona by Tom Rhodes

Legislative issues have been at the forefront of university administrative activities as state-funded institutions make their best case for a share of Arizona's budget surplus while trying to satisfy increasing demands for oversight and accountability.

The Office of Institutional Research has been busy preparing several external requests for the opening of the legislative session. In cooperation with ASU and NAU, the University of Arizona provided data for the first annual Arizona University System Report Card released on Statehood Day, February 14. The report card measures progress toward key benchmarks and performance goals by aggregating data from the three state universities into system measures for a legislative audience. Determining how to best meld disparate data from various time periods and sources into valid system measures for three state institutions with differing missions was a challenging process.

The State Legislature has discussed discontinuing funding for Arizona International Campus (AIC), the new four-year liberal arts college affiliated with the University of Arizona and located 20 minutes southeast of downtown Tucson, if fall 1997 enrollment does not meet a minimum level. University administrators have countered that setting such a critical threshold would in itself jeopardize efforts to boost enrollment at the fledgling campus. Levels recently mentioned at legislative budget hearings would require a 500% increase--from the
current enrollment of 60 students to 300 students—to maintain state funding. AIC began its first semester last August with an initial enrollment of 46 students.

The university reached an institutional milestone in December when the National Science Foundation ranked the UA 10th among all public universities in research expenditures for the first time. This honor coincided with the initial casting of the first mirror for the Large Binocular Telescope (LBT) by Steward Observatory’s Mirror Laboratory. When completed, the LBT will be the largest and most powerful optical telescope in the world, showcasing optics technology developed at the UA that allows large, light weight, low-cost mirrors to be cast that dwarf the size limitations of other methods. The LBT will be sited at the controversial Mount Graham International Observatory near Safford.

Pima Community College by Ellen McGregor

The Annual AZAIR Conference will be held at Pima Community College’s new community campus' technology hub on Thursday, April 3. Dr. Jensen, chancellor at the college, will be the keynote speaker. His topic is "Critical Research Questions facing AZ's Institutions of Higher Education."

The last item is letting you know about our home page at: http://pimacc.pima.edu/~instresearch/index.html. The IR Office at Pima Community College has included parts of the 1995-96 Fact Book on its home page.

COLORADO
by Pat Fay

Welcome:
Welcome to Mark Klinger from the Institutional Research office at Pikes Peak Community College as the new Colorado reporter for Panorama. Mark has graciously agreed to replace me as the Colorado reporter. Effective January 1, 1997, I resigned my position as assistant director of institutional research and planning at Aims Community College and accepted a faculty position at Aims. Because of this career change, I felt it was necessary to resign as the reporter for Colorado. I hope to stay active in topics related to institutional research, but also hope to gain a new perspective from the academic side of education. I will miss my contact with friends and colleagues in IR. I will keep the same email and phone as previously, so please stay in touch. Once again, I would like to thank Mark for volunteering.

New Positions:
CU Boulder Interim Chancellor
CU Boulder has a new interim chancellor. Dr. Richard Bynny, previously system vice president for academic affairs and research and a CU veteran of almost 20 years, was named interim chancellor effective January 8, 1997. Dr. Roderic Park, previous chancellor, retired in January after 2 years at Boulder.

Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education Research Associate
WICHE has hired Jackie Stirn as a part-time research associate. Jackie joins WICHE after being at Regis University and at the CCHE (Colorado Commission of Higher Education) prior to Regis. Jackie's new email address is jacki@wiche.edu.

CU Denver Programmer/Analyst III
Denise Sokol has just hired a programmer/analyst III in her office of Institutional Research and Planning. The new person is Michael Protoz and he replaces Connie Flieder. Michael was most recently a meteorologist in the Air Force.

Hot Topics in Colorado:
Performance Indicators
The hot topic for all institutional researchers in Colorado is performance indicators. With two bills (1088 and 1219) that address performance indicators, everyone is hot and heavy into performance indicators. The 1088 response to CCHE (Colorado Commission of Higher Education) was due on January 17th. Now IR staff are working steadily on indicators for 1219. CCHE has drafted a set of statewide indicators and draft institutional indicators are due to CCHE on February 14th.

Review of New Post-Tenure Review Policy
Colorado University is reviewing a draft of a new post-tenure review policy. All tenured faculty would undergo post-tenure review at least every 7 years. The document calls for tenured faculty to devise a
professional development plan that is individually tailored and flexible. Another goal of the draft plan is to incorporate greater faculty accountability measures.

IDAHO by Jerry Engstrom

The State Board of Education in Idaho continues to focus attention on the sector of the college age population that it considers educationally unprepared or under-prepared. This group is roughly estimated to be 70% of the college age population—those who will not earn at least a four-year degree. The first project proposed for this group is called the "passport to success". To establish the program, the Board has proposed the expenditure of $250,000 to fund the development of a new model for delivering education for the unprepared and under-prepared. They are now served by a variety of loosely knit programs. In addition, the Board has requested $3 million from the legislature to provide direct stipends to those in this group.

However, the chance of any new funding emerging from this year's legislature appears slight. While not only true in Idaho, the rapidly rising cost of the prison system is diverting funds from public education. This is especially true of higher education.

As evidence of this shift, while the state's general account increased 120% from 1987 to 1997 the appropriations going to corrections has increased around 300% and the higher education appropriation less than 80%. This year, for the first time, legislators are speaking of the possibility of the time coming when all state general account funding for postsecondary education might be eliminated.

In other statewide news, by this fall there will be a common application form to apply for admittance to the public institutions of higher education in Idaho. The form will be available either on paper or electronically. At the same time a common course numbering system will be instituted in these same institutions. Ninety three of the basic core courses that fulfill graduation requirements will have the same name and number in each of the public institutions. Private colleges in the state are also interested in participating in the common course listing. These initiatives will ease the task of enrolling and transferring in the state.

MONTANA by Cel Johnson

Montana's 55th legislature is in full swing! Aspects of the state's general appropriation for higher education are still being debated on a daily basis. "It ain't over 'til it's over" (late April!), but early indications are that this isn't a beer-and-skittles year for the Montana University System. Legislators have already taken major swipes at funds earmarked for telecommunications and technology bonding. Funds to establish a statewide database for tracking students seem to be on the skids. Classified employees, disturbed by the prospect of yet another year of low raises, have been discussing the possibility of a strike.

Some statewide issues are rising from the ashes once again, like the fabled phoenix. One legislator has submitted a bill that would put annual sessions on the ballot, this time as a proposal to switch from biennial 90-day sessions to annual 45-day sessions. Sure. Not a bad idea, perhaps, but the Montana institutional research community prefers to have at least 1 year in 2 without a barrage of ad hoc data requests. And a state sales tax is being proposed once again, despite being dismissed by 70% of the voters in 1971 and 75% in 1993. This time, the proposal is to provide property tax relief with a sales tax rather than just adding an additional tax. We'll see.

The Montana University System is lobbying for a bill that would exempt the University System from the state Worker's Compensation fund. The system would still need to carry insurance, but it could be bid to the private sector, with an estimated biennial saving of more than $300,000. This has been a bill with great rhetoric on its side, but the state fund has fought hard in opposition, arguing that they are not yet ready to bid competitively for University System business. Our
Republican governor also opposes the bill, but most of the support in committee came from Republicans.

The most alarming bill for the Montana University System is House Bill 500, which seeks to put an end to competition by state agencies with the private sector. In its current state, the bill would ban the university system from providing any product, good, or service for the public that is already available in the private sector. Failure to comply would allow any or all private sector complainants to take the offending unit of the university system to court and seek civil damages. In its most extreme interpretation, the bill would prevent the public schools from offering any courses available from private schools. More moderate interpretations would prevent public schools from sponsoring conferences, concerts, etc.

Closer to home, Cel Johnson of MSU-Bozeman and Jean Horst of MSU-Billings finally held in their hands the fruits of last summer's labors on the MSU economic impact study--the printed report was just published. The bad news is that only the statewide impact portion is done--they still have to finish the work on county impacts.

Jean Horst reports that MSU-Billings is searching for a chief information officer and has reached the campus interview stage. They are also searching for a dean of business and a dean of arts and sciences. The campus has begun its self-study process in preparation for a 1998 accreditation visit from the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges. For the first time, MSU-Billings held intersession classes for 3 weeks between fall and spring semesters.

Jim Olomon at UM-Missoula has hired two new staff members who started work on Monday, February 3. Cathy Bowles is a systems analyst, and Lana Denison is administrative support. Additional staff support will help Jim develop some data warehousing capabilities for the university. UM-Missoula also held their first intersession classes this year with an enrollment of 700 students.

NEVADA by Jan Brown

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Governor Miller's budget includes funds for a new library and a law school at UNLV. The governor is providing a $3 million "challenge grant" to UNLV to start a new law school, with classes to open in fall 1998. That sum represents 80% of the expected cost -- the balance will be raised from private donations. The budget also includes $47 million for the new library which will be located next to the recently built Classroom Building Complex.

UNLV has received a $2.2 million donation from William Bennett, owner of the Sahara Hotel and Casino, to build a professional development building adjacent to the planned Paradise Elementary School on the university campus. The school will open on campus in August, 1988, as part of a unique three-way agreement between McCarran International Airport, the Clark County School District, and UNLV. Under the agreement, McCarran International Airport is buying the property on which the school is currently located from the school district. UNLV will provide land for the construction of a new school, and construction will be funded by the school district using proceeds from the sale of the existing property. The new Paradise Elementary will be a professional practice school for educating at-risk students, training current teachers, and developing future teachers.

University of Nevada, Reno

The Board of Regents of the University and Community College System of Nevada has renewed Chancellor Richard Jarvis' contract for another 3 years, effective July 1, 1997, after conducting an evaluation of his performance for the past 3 years.

The biennial legislative session began in January. Nevada's governor, Robert Miller, has submitted his Executive Budget to the Legislature, and the chancellor has expressed his pleasure with the recommended level of funding for the system. Some highlights of the governor's recommendations for higher education are : (a) 19.1% increase in UCSCS State Operating Budget (increase of $121.6 million); (b) full funding of instruction formulae (would add 168 full-time faculty, 87 part-time faculty, 54 instructional support staff); (c)
additional $16 million for academic support services; (d) continuation of the $7 million "one-shot" financial aid funds provided for the 1995-97 biennium; (e) 3% per year of the biennium (total 6%) salary adjustment for State of Nevada employees; (f) $104.3 million for capital construction projects throughout the system; and (g) establishment of a law school in Las Vegas.

UNR has named Jane C. S. Long as dean of the Mackay School of Mines. Dean Long is the first woman in the school's history to hold the position. She is coming from the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in Berkeley, California, and will take over her new post on July 1.

October 1997 marks the visit of a group of 16 peer reviewers for the university's 10-year accreditation by the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges. Meanwhile, the campus has been heavily engaged in the process of preparing its self-study report for submission to the Association some time this summer.

The Institutional Analysis office, having just published the Fall 1996 Databook, is now gearing up for the 1997-98 round of program review. This next year will see increased involvement of the office in assessment activities, as well.

Preliminary spring 1997 enrollment reports for UNR indicate that compared to spring 1996, headcount enrollments are flat, but FTE may increase somewhere between 1.5% and 1.8%.

NEW MEXICO
by Chester Haughwaut and Amy Holt

The State of New Mexico's higher education institutions have been asked to set aside 3% of their current budget. It is possible that shortfalls within the state's budget will require institutions to cut their budgeted revenues by 3% in the last 3 months of the fiscal year. If these cuts are required, it will be the second year in a row that New Mexico's universities have had to adjust their budgets.

Several capital projects were approved for funding during general elections in November. New Mexico voters approved general obligation bonds be issued that allow several New Mexico higher education institutions to begin building and renovations projects. This funding is needed because the state of New Mexico is not providing appropriated funds for capital projects at this time.

UTAH
System of Higher Education

Utah Legislative Watch
by Joseph Curtin

In addition to the usual concerns in the Utah legislature this year, the following three items are being considered:

H.B. 261 - Higher Education Presidential Authority

An act relating to higher education; providing that the president of a higher education institution base salary determinations of support and other professional personnel on a position of classification plan; providing that the president may adopt policies for employee sick leave and service recognition . . .

H.B. 7 - Tuition Waiver Amendments

An act relating to higher education; modifying the ceiling on the partial waiver of the nonresident portion of total tuition in granting non-resident partial tuition scholarships; expanding geographical boundaries for scholarship applicants; removing caps on the number of scholarships; making certain technical changes . . .
HJR 4 - Transferability Of State College Credits Resolution

A joint resolution of the legislature encouraging the State Board of Regents to review the transferability and acceptance of credit policies within the state's higher education system as the system moves from a quarter to a semester calendar...

Other News Around the State

There have been two changes in Institutional Research offices during the last few months. Terry Haas was appointed the director of institutional research at Utah Valley State College in January. Terry replaces Dr. Nancy Hill who left the department last July. Terry had been serving as the interim director of institutional research since last July. Joseph Curtin, I.R. - programmer/analyst at Utah Valley State College left in November to fill the assistant director of institutional analysis and data administration position at Brigham Young University. This position was left vacant when Danny Olsen was named the director of assessment at B.Y.U. last October.

Utah State University
by Laura Lowe

To help more students move through college more quickly, saving both time and money, the Utah Board of Regents initiated the concurrent enrollment program in 1988. Concurrent enrollment classes are college level classes offered to high school students for both high school and college credit. The program has shown dramatic growth, increasing 25% (from 86,000 college credits

hours in 1994-95 to 108,000 in 1995-96). The past year’s concurrent enrollment represented the equivalent of 2,400 full-time students which is comparable to the total full-time enrollment of some Utah colleges. The courses are usually taught at the high schools (though some are taught on campus or through distance learning programs) by local college professors or approved high school teachers who use the same college syllabi, textbooks, and exams. To participate in concurrent enrollment, a student must be a senior, have a 3.0 GPA or an ACT score of 22 or higher, and/or the approval of school officials. Although the program is limited to vocational and general education courses, students who take full advantage of it can earn up to 45 quarter hours, a full year’s equivalent of college course work.

The College of Eastern Utah, located in Price, welcomed a new president last fall. Dr. Grace Sawyer Jones replaced Dr. Michael A. Petersen, who accepted the position of associate commissioner for academic affairs with the Utah System of Higher Education. Dr. Jones previously served as vice president for multi cultural affairs and as a tenured professor of business and English at the State University of New York College at Oneonta. She is the first woman and first minority president at any of the nine public higher education institutions in Utah.

The State Board of Regents is also searching for new presidents at two of the nine state-run institutions. President Gerald R. Sherratt announced his retirement from Southern Utah University, and Arthur K. Smith, president of the University of Utah, has been named chancellor of the University of Houston system and president of its flagship university.

State auditors will be looking at enrollment figures at all of USHE’s nine institutions after questions arose regarding some courses at the College of Eastern Utah in Price. Auditors will be looking at course content and the number of faculty and staff enrolled to determine whether or not taxpayers should be billed for educational costs.

Patricia S. Terrell has been named the new vice president for student services and dean of academic support services at Utah State University. She has been associate vice president for student affairs and dean of student life at Southern Methodist University, a private university with an enrollment of nearly 9,500 students, since 1989. She replaces long-time USU vice president for student services, Val R. Christensen, who retired last July 1. Dr. Terrell will assume her new post at USU on March 1.

On February 10, 1997, Utah State University will be replacing its home-grown IMS student information system, with SIS+ (SCT). The benefits of the new system include allowing records to be continuously updated and linking many databases, which were not possible under the old system. Updating student records and training users (e.g., advisors and admissions and records, registration, and financial aid staff) has been critical, since the new and old systems will not be run parallel.
University of Wyoming Trustees have named Philip L. Dubois, provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs and professor of political science of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, to become the 22nd president of the University of Wyoming. Dubois was selected from more than 120 individuals who applied or were nominated for the UW presidency. He plans to start officially on April 1, 1997, and hopes to make several short visits prior to that time to begin the process of orientation. Dubois earned a bachelor's degree in political science (1972) from the University of California, Davis; master's (1974) and doctoral (1978) degrees in political science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Between 1978-1991 he taught political science at UC-Davis, and has served as professor of political science and vice chancellor for academic affairs at UNC-Charlotte since 1991. The title of provost was added in 1994. Outgoing president Terry Roark will return to teaching in the department of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Wyoming.

Although the University of Wyoming did not submit a supplemental budget request because of pressing state funding concerns in other areas, several measures before the general session of this year's state legislature are very likely to affect the University. SF150, to allow the president of the Associated Students of the University of Wyoming to become a voting member of the Board of Trustees, was passed out of committee on January 31. Currently serving in an advisory capacity to the Trustees, the ASUW president represents a student body that provides more than 20% of University funding.

A recent Wyoming Supreme Court decision declared the present K-12 funding plan to be in violation of the state constitution. One plan the legislators are working on is to provide resources for a system to connect K-12, community colleges, and the University of Wyoming through telecommunications and the Internet. This would allow Wyoming high school and community college students to take courses not offered on their campuses.

The welfare bill, HB186, would eliminate the work requirement exemption for full-time students on welfare who maintain a C average. New Federal guidelines would no longer fund benefits for non-working students. The bill went to the House floor for discussion on January 30 with a last minute amendment recommended by Governor Jim Geringer. This amendment calls for a state student loan program, elimination of cash benefits for students, and establishment of job training programs in Cheyenne and Torrington. Rep. Dorothy Perkins (R-Casper), chair of the House Labor, Health, and Social Services Committee, emphasized that the bill "isn't fixed in stone" at this point. Students on welfare, who comprise 9% of the state's total welfare caseload, are anxiously waiting to learn if they will be able to attend in the fall semester.

After failing by one vote on January 29, an amended proposal to move the Nature Conservancy's Natural Diversity Database to the University of Wyoming prevailed by 2 to 1 in a January 30 vote. The database tracks more than 200 species of animals and more than 725 species of plants. The Nature Conservancy will discontinue its funding of the database in June. The director of the database, Rich Lindsey, stated that it will greatly benefit UW and save industries time and money on environmental impact studies. Data from the program, he said, is available in 3 to 4 hours at a cost of $240, much less than the cost to companies of gathering such information themselves. He added that Oregon is the only other state in which a comparable program is not part of a state agency. A House-Senate conference committee will decide its fate later in the session.

Western Athletic Conference Commissioner Karl Benson spoke in late January at the Laramie Quarterback club meeting in Laramie. He told the audience that he was never so emotionally low as when BYU and UW were both left out of bowl games this year. "The support Wyoming had from the other 15 members of the WAC was real," he said, adding that the Copper Bowl now realizes they made a "significant mistake" by not inviting Wyoming.
He describes UW's recent changes, a new president (Philip Dubois), new athletic director (Lee Moon), and new football coach (Dana Dimel) as representing "great potential for maximizing what has been done in the past and what can be done in the future." Coach Dimel came to us from Kansas State University, and replaces Joe Tiller, who is now at Purdue University.
Where should the RMAIR Conference by held in 1999?

Do you have a paper or topic for presentation at RMAIR 1997, October 15-17 in Cloudcroft, New Mexico? Give it some thought!

See you at the Forum in Lake Buena Vista, Florida, May 18-21! Book Early