Student Technology Fee Committee

At the University of Washington

Proposal

No annual report

UAC - MyPlan Year Three

Introduction

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Owner	darcyvp
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Descriptions

Abstract

The MyPlan year three proposal is being submitted under the "Frontier Technology" category because it delivers rich, Web 2.0 features to improve the student experience, and because it is being developed using a Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) to ensure that it delivers long-term value to future students. Proposed scope is based on input from over 500 students who responded to a survey in January 2011, as well as feedback from students and advisers collected through ten usability studies during MyPlan development. Demographic data show strong response both from undergraduate and graduate students, and our final scope proposal includes features that are specifically intended to ensure that the MyPlan system provides value to all students, regardless of class standing and "in major" status. If funded, MyPlan year three will build upon multi-quarter, academic planning capabilities by enabling students to have both a primary and alternate plan, building in intelligence like validation of requisite rules and personalization of the experience based on a student's profile. MyPlan year three would also extend registration planning and provide robust integration to current registration functionality. Additional details about scope can be found in the benefits section.

Students are under more pressure than ever to graduate quickly, competition for desirable majors and courses is increasing, and academic requirements can be complex and difficult to navigate. Students need enhanced student-centered features that support their needs. MyPlan will be developed collaboratively with students and advisors using industry-proven user-centered design processes. Ongoing research and input from students will be used as appropriate to adjust scope to deliver the highest value features within the project's one year timeline.

Category Justification

The MyPlan year three proposal is being submitted under the "Frontier Technology" category because it delivers rich, Web 2.0 features to improve the student experience, and because it is being developed using a Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) to ensure that it delivers long-term value to future students.

Background

The University of Washington has a variety of web-based, student facing self-service systems that support activities such as registration, tuition payment, degree audit, and financial aid acceptance. For the most part these systems were developed in the late 90s as a means to move away from paper processing and

5 March 2013

phone based registration. While they meet the minimum requirements of allowing students to perform critical transactions, they are very limited in the features they provide, do not provide the information that students need to make decisions, and do not provide an integrated end-to-end experience for students. As a result, students need to use several stand-alone systems to access information they need and devise their own tools for academic planning.

MyPlan Foundation

MyPlan has been funded through a combination of two Student Tech Fee (STF) awards ($420,000 approved in April of 2011, and $455,000 approved in April of 2012), staffing and funds from UW-IT, staffing from the Graduate School, Undergraduate Academic Affairs, and the Office of the Registrar, and supplemental funds from the Office of Planning and Budgeting.

MyPlan year 1 scope that was delivered in September of 2012 included the following broad features:

Finding courses - robust searching, filtering and save function that allows students to find courses of interest based on basic course data, as well as program requirements

Academic planning - the ability for students to plan future coursework

Improved academic progress tracking - improved usability of degree audit reports and integration with finding courses (by program requirements) and adding courses to an academic plan

Share with advisers - the ability for a student to share their plan and get adviser feedback

MyPlan year 2 scope, which is being delivered incrementally through summer 2013, includes:

Registration planning - providing the ability to search, filter, and find courses based on section data and develop more detailed plan as preparation for registration.

Section "watch list" and notifications - will alert students to changes in the time schedule or seat availability that would impact their ability to register for sections of interest.

Adviser recommended – will allow advisers to recommend courses to individual students, and in turn allow students to move courses from 'recommended' to 'planned' if they choose to act on an adviser's recommendation.

Adviser shared plans that can be used as templates - our research

shows that the majority of academic programs distribute sample plans to students. Providing theses sample plans in a systematic and consistent way will make it easier for students to access and use this valuable information. Additionally, individual plans are critical to graduate students, who often work from highly individualized plan that are developed by their faculty advisers.

Audit plan – extending the degree audit function to not only audit a students academic record, but also audit part or all of a student's academic plan will inform higher quality plans and allow students to easily and quickly verify that their planned course helps them progress through their academic major.

In addition to these major features, the MyPlan project has also focused on improving the breadth and quality of data that can be surfaced through MyPlan. Key activities include partnering with the Graduate School and graduate academic programs to codify graduate program requirements in the UW's degree audit system, and partnering with the Office of the Registrar on their biennial general catalog refresh. Additional details about the focus and deliverables for MyPlan can be found on the MyPlan project site: https://depts.washington.edu/myplan/

Benefits to Students and the University

MyPlan deliverables to date have focused on making it easier for students to find courses and programs of interest, plan their academic career, execute on that plan by preparing for registration, and track their academic progress. MyPlan year three will build on these features, supporting multiple plans, adding additional intelligence, and improving integration to registration and other existing student applications.

MyPlan Year Three enhancement will focus in three primary areas:

Ability for students to develop and maintain a back-up plan – allows students to adjust course as necessary, which is important for students interested in competitive majors, students who are considering multiple degree programs, and students who for a variety of reasons need to adjust their plans after declaring a major. This feature set was originally planned for year two, but deferred due to higher priorities that were discovered during usability testing. Allowing for multiple plans impacts almost every feature within MyPlan, which significantly increases complexity of development.

Continued enhancement of registration planning and integration to the UW's registration system – improving tools specifically for registration continually tops the list of student priorities. MyPlan Year Three will continue enhancing the feature set that supports registration planning, integrate to the registration system, and

explore low risk improvements to the registration system. While many aspects of registration are driven by policy, the MyPlan team will explore light weight changes to the registration system that would improve its usability and efficiency for students.

Improved feedback and personalization (rules validation, simple personalization, and alerts) – once we have delivered a robust set of features to support academic and registration planning, our attention will turn to making those features more intelligent based on the rules of the institution and what we know about each student end-user. Using what the system knows about the student will allow us to save the student time by defaulting some selections (like campus, or degree for audit), and alert students to actions they may need to take (like applying for a major or applying to graduate). Implementing validation and messaging related to institutional rules will support more informed academic planning and help student stay on track.

MyPlan Backlog: Comparison of program requirements across multiple majors - this feature has been deferred because the UW does not currently have program requirements in a format that can easily be consumed outside of the degree audit system. Student input continues to highlight the need for this function, and we are working to codify program requirements through a parallel and separately funded project to implement a new Curriculum Management system. Once this dependency has been addressed, the MyPlan team will assess options and priority for delivery.

MyPlan is intended to help students spend less time and energy on logistics, so they have more time for learning. We want to reduce stress associated with academic planning and registration, improve the student-adviser dialog, and provide intelligent and tailored interactions that result in higher quality plans.

MyPlan is being developed using a service-oriented architecture (SOA) to ensure that its core architecture supports flexibility and extensibility for the future. While current students don't really care what's "under the covers" of MyPlan, this architecture ensures that the STF investment in MyPlan provides long-term value to future students. Funding MyPlan directly benefits current UW students in the near-term and builds the foundation of an integrated student self-service system that can continue to be enhanced for years to come.

Departmental Endorsements

I very strongly support the MyPlan Year 3 Proposal. This is a thoughtful plan, that builds well on earlier work (years 1 and 2) to meet the needs of our UW students. What's particularly compelling is the focus on back-up planning (which accommodates changes that invariably occur in scheduling or access), on registration (to increase usability and efficiency) and on creating alerts that will provide useful

information to students. The proposal is driven by student input and advice; I endorse it enthusiastically.
Gerald J. Baldasty
Senior Vice Provost for Academic and Student Affairs
Professor, Communication

"MyPlan provides students with a new tool for selecting courses and monitoring progress towards degree. In my experience with students as a faculty member and as Assoc. Chair of Chemistry, students have expressed a long-standing need for course and degree-management tools. The first version of MyPlan was a successful response to this need. Building on this initial success, the activities outlined in this proposal will significantly enhance MyPlan's capabilities. In particular, giving students the ability to see how courses satisfy various degree requirements will ensure that students make informed enrollment decisions resulting in timely degree completion. In addition, the integration of MyPlan with the UW registration system will address a long-standing student request for more efficient registration tools. UW-IT is committed to the development of technologies that enhance the student experience, and the expanded capabilities of MyPlan realized through the work outlined here will clearly benefit students as they select courses and work towards their degrees."
Philip Reid. Assoc. Vice Provost UW-IT Academic Services and Professor of Chemistry

The College of Arts and Sciences has endorsed the first two years of MyPlan work, and we continue to do so. We need continued investment in tools to access course information and to get students into the courses they need. Better planning will help students find the right intellectual home more quickly and make better progress in those programs once they are there. That is where and how students learn best.
Kevin Mihata, Associate Dean for Educational Programs, College of Arts & Sciences

"The Office of the Registrar (OUR) is happy to support MyPlan for the third year. MyPlan will empower students to make critical and strategic decisions about their degree program and registration plan by providing increased transparency of departmental course scheduling, course availability, and degree progress. MyPlan is a critical resource that will contribute to the effectiveness of the overall student system tool set, and will better position these systems to meet the technological demands of future students. OUR is committed to developing learning resources for student and departmental users of MyPlan in partnership with Student Information System development teams. OUR will maintain learning resources over the life cycle of the MyPlan system." Virjean Edwards, University of Washington Registrar

"MyPlan is serving an important role in helping students plan their

6

own unique paths through UW. The enthusiastic student response to the launch of MyPlan reinforces my commitment to continued development of MyPlan. I endorse this proposal for phase 3 of MyPlan."
Ed Taylor, Vice Provost and Dean, Undergraduate Academic Affairs; Professor, Educational Leadership & Policy Studies

Installation Timeline

MyPlan is developed through an agile process. The MyPlan year 3 release schedule will be determined with input from students and advisers, taking academic calendar usage patterns and risks into account. Regardless of the iterative approach that evolves, MyPlan year 3 scope will be developed within the constraints of the Student Tech Fee one-year funding cycle, and will be delivered prior to the start of 2014 academic year.

Resources Provided by Department

UW-IT and partner organizations have made significant financial and staffing contributions to the development of MyPlan, and will maintain this commitment if this year's proposal is awarded. UW-IT's contributions include supplementing the team with a project manager, user experience designer, senior engineers responsible for integrating into the on-line systems already in place at the UW, database administrators and other staff responsible for implementation of the underlying technical infrastructure. Additionally, the following academic administrative units are contributing significant resources to the project:

The Office of the Registrar - subject matter expertise associated with integrating course and section data, encoders who are working with graduate programs on preliminary pilots of graduate programs in u.Achieve (DARS), and learning manager who is developing on-line tutorials to support student adoption

Undergraduate Academic Affairs - web publisher to assist with user research and usability testing, as well as advising subject matter experts

The Graduate School - subject matter experts to help ensure that MyPlan serves the needs of graduate students, and software development staff to ensure integration to the MyGrad system.

Campus academic units - advising subject matter expertise to ensure that MyPlan enhances the student/advisor dialog, and curriculum subject matter expertise to assist with definition of program requirements

Once developed, ongoing technical support for MyPlan will be

provided by the Student Information Systems team within UW-IT, with student-facing support provided by the Office of the Registrar and the UW advising community.

Access Restrictions (if any)

As a web-based application, MyPlan will be accessible to all UW degree seeking students. Additionally, the public access portions of MyPlan, including course and section level data will be available to applicants.

Student Endorsements

MyPlan directly addresses important priority themes that repeatedly emerge through empirical student input channels.

MyPlan usability studies conducted in 2012: The MyPlan team conducted 10 usability studies during the first year of development, and will continue to focus on usability studies with students as a primary of priorities and design. During usability studies, students enthusiastically endorsed the product. Outcomes from the final and most comprehensive study strongly support enhancing MyPlan to provide more proactive warnings and intelligent feedback about whether what a student is planning is viable. Specific comments included: "If a course isn't scheduled next quarter, why does MyPlan allow me to select it?", and "I'd like MyPlan to verify whether I've met the prerequisite requirements, not just show me what they are."

Student survey on MyPlan priorities: In December 2011, UW-IT partnered with undergraduate and graduate advisors to get broad student input on MyPlan priorities. Responses from over 500 students directly influenced our scope proposal. In addition to looking at the bulk statistics, we also evaluated outcomes based on class standing to ensure MyPlan adds value to all students regardless of class standing or "in major" status.

Student survey on 2012 Priorities: The Student Program in UW-IT conducted a survey in May 2011 to get student input on priorities for improving student self-service. Of the 119 responses, 40% of students indicated improved systems for academic planning as their highest priority. Improved information about course content came in second, with 30% of students indicating it as their highest priority. MyPlan's scope provides capabilities that address both of these priorities.

2011 Student Research Group Findings (Human Centered Design & Engineering): Data from a survey (n=226) conducted by a HCDE student research group led by Professor Judith Ramey shows that that student pain points relative to academic planning and registration change during their time at the UW. Freshman

8

respondents indicated equal difficulty with finding a major, planning courses, and registering, while upper classman struggle specifically with course planning. MyPlan year two scope was developed to ensure broad benefit to undergraduate and graduate students at all phases of the student life-cycle.

Fall 2010 Registration Focus Groups: Planning tools, integration of information and resources for registering, and improved search and exploration systems were among the top needs expressed by students during focus groups held in the Fall of 2010.

Items

Group	Funded	Item	Unit price	Quantity	Subtotal
Software	*	MyPlan Year Three Deliverables	$455,000	1	$455,000.

Total requested: $455,000.00
Total preliminarily funded: $455,000.00

Comments

How can one be sure that this is not simply funding staff salaries? The proposal says that "Resources Provided By Department" include supplementing the team with certain personnel but does not unequivocally state that they will not be paid out of the $455k.

This sounds like a reinvention of personal organization software. That is hardly bleeding edge stuff and is inconsistent with Frontier Technology.

jwross55 — February 25, 2013 @ 6:46 p.m.