1. What is Banner and the Banner Project?

SCT Banner is a comprehensive information system known as an Enterprise Resource Planning system, or ERP. ERP systems are designed to integrate an institution’s full range of business processes into a consolidated information system. Banner, created by SCT Corporation (see www.sct.com), is an ERP system specifically designed for higher education. Banner includes modules for student information processing (admissions, student records, and financial aid); alumni processing; financial information processing; and human resources and payroll processing. At present, UWF has licensed the Finance and Human Resources modules of Banner.

The UWF Banner Project is the university-wide effort to install the Banner Finance and Human Resources components of the Banner system, and make them operational in mid-2004 and early 2005, respectively.

2. Why are we doing this?

As part of the transition of Florida’s state universities to more independent public bodies corporate, Florida’s public universities are being required to end their use of the state’s systems for financial and payroll processing. (These systems are known as SAMAS/FLAIR and the Bureau of State Payrolls.)

Florida has mandated that its public universities be able to perform independent financial processing using their own information systems as of July 1, 2004; and able to perform independent payroll processing using their own systems as of January 1, 2005.

All of Florida’s public universities chose ERP systems as their solution for independent finance and payroll processing. UWF partnered with a consortium of universities (including the University of Florida, Florida State University, the University of North Florida, and UWF) in mid-2002 to conduct a system selection process. From that process, some of the universities chose the PeopleSoft system as their ERP solution, while the smaller universities – including UWF – chose the less complex SCT Banner system.

Other Florida universities using SCT Banner include Florida Atlantic University, Florida Gulf Coast University, the University of South Florida, the University of North Florida, and New College.
3. How does Banner fit into the information technology strategic plan?

Although UWF is making the move to Banner as part of the state’s mandate, UWF is using this opportunity to utilize Banner’s features to move to a more complete electronic business and services environment. UWF’s *Information Technology Strategic Plan*, approved by the University Planning Council in May 2003, calls for building an environment where university operations are conducted via the Internet and services are delivered online. Moving to Banner as the new foundation for financial and human resources processing is key to that effort.

Banner has many features to support an “eBusiness” and “eServices” environment, including:

- web-based access;
- self-service features for employees accessible over the web; automated workflows and authorizations;
- and flexible information reporting replacing static hardcopy reports.

For more information on UWF’s implementation of the *Information Technology Strategic Plan*, see the web site http://itplan.uwf.edu.

4. Who is working on this project? Who is guiding this project?

Almost 100 people across the university are working on the Banner project. The offices most heavily involved include the Office of the Controller, Procurement and Contracts, Human Resources, University Budgets, Internal Audit, Sponsored Research, and Information Technology Services.

The Banner Project is overseen by a Steering Committee consisting of Executive Vice President Hal White, Vice President for Administrative Affairs Cornelius Wooten, and Chief Information Officer Michael Dieckmann.

The project is managed by a Coordinating Committee consisting of the directors of the departments most heavily involved in the Banner implementation. Associate Vice President Betsy Bowers chairs this committee; other members include Controller Jan Woody, Director of University Budgets Gloria Resmondo, Director of Human Resources Sherell Hendrickson, Director of Sponsored Research Sandra VanderHeyden, and Director of Procurement and Contracts David O’Brien.

Colleen Asmus and Barbara Daley serve as UWF’s project leaders for the Banner Project. Marge DuFala of SCT Corporation is the SCT project manager assigned to UWF.

The Banner Projected is divided into three broad “implementation” efforts: the Finance Team, led by Doyle Pitts; the Human Resources Team, led by Linda Archer; and the Technical Team, led by Barney Whitley.
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<th><strong>5. When will it all happen?</strong></th>
<th>The first portions of Banner to be released for general use will be purchasing card, or “Pcard” processes, in April 2004. The finance system will become operational in July 2004 with the start of the 2004-2005 fiscal year. The Human Resources system will become operational in January 2005 with the start of the 2005 federal tax year.</th>
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<td><strong>6. How will Banner change overall financial processing at UWF?</strong></td>
<td>Some areas will experience little change in financial processing and some areas will change dramatically. Areas that will not change, or will experience very little change include student processes from admission, registration, financial aid award and disbursement, fee payment and other cashiering functions. One change that will affect almost all financial activity will be the conversion to the new Chart of Accounts. SAMAS nine digit Department Numbers will be replaced with unique combinations of Fund, Organization and Program (FOP) codes. An easy to remember “Index Code” may be used in place of the FOP in many cases to simplify the codes needed by the user. SAMAS Object Codes will be replaced by Account Codes. Banner has the capability to complete many financial processes electronically, eliminating the need to physically route paperwork for approvals. These capabilities will probably be phased in, as users receive training and develop the skills and familiarity necessary to effectively use the system. An example of this would be the electronic routing of a requisition from the department through various approvals to the Office of Procurement and Contracts, and then the purchase order to the vendor and Controller’s Office for action. This process will not be implemented immediately on July 1, 2004, so departments will continue to prepare paper requisitions until this process can be phased in. Financial information input into Banner will be much more readily available than under the current system. Repetitive or routine reports can be designed for users to query the Datamart directly from their computer workstation without having to request assistance from ITS or the Controller’s Office.</td>
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<td><strong>7. How will it change budgeting?</strong></td>
<td>The Banner Budget Module will provide UWF with easy and direct access to administrative and academic budget information. Managers will have better access to information to support the strategic decision-making process. Eventually, paper budget transfers will be eliminated. Budget transfers will be completed within a matter of minutes instead of days, and users will have immediate notice when budget is not available. In short, the Banner Budget Module will meet our needs today, as well as keeping us positioned to meet the challenges of the future.</td>
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8. **How will it change purchasing and procurement?**

Various purchasing changes will occur with the release of Banner. UWF is implementing its own purchasing card program, in partnership with Bank of America. In March 2004, existing “p-cards” will be exchanged for the new Bank of America p-cards, and p-card reviewers will be trained in how to use Banner.

After July 1, 2004, departments will continue to submit paper purchase requisitions, as Procurement and Contracts spends the next six months completing the configuration of Banner for online purchasing. Following that time, Procurement and Contracts will begin pilot implementations of fully electronic online purchasing with selected departments, working toward a university wide rollout of online purchasing some time in 2005.

Automating the purchasing function, allowing both the user and Procurement & Contracts personnel to spend more time on strategic efforts that will contribute to their respective missions, can save an incredible amount of time.

Some of the benefits of purchasing under the SCT Banner system include lower administration costs, lower overall prices for goods & services and increased overall spending visibility.

Currently is costs approximately $85.00 to process a single Purchase Order. SCT Banner will require less paperwork and administrative support. We estimate the cost per transaction will be reduced to approximately $20.00 each. Additional benefits include reduced cycle or processing time saving days from the current requisition to PO process. A final benefit in the administrative area should be the reduction of human error and the associated time savings of the same. The fewer times a transaction is handled, the less chance of an error occurring that must be reworked.

SCT Banner will improve control over the Procurement function by allowing P&C to put large Master Contract Agreements in place for goods and services and providing access to campus users to order directly off those contracts without any further approval or processing. This should consolidate all campus purchases, which will result in more favorable pricing from preferred vendors.

Finally, SCT Banner will provide access to critical real-time information that will allow Procurement & Contracts to improve our negotiating power with suppliers based on accurate historical usage and will allow us to better prepare for future trends. The using departments will be supplied with more simplified and accurate reporting regarding all of their procurement actions that should allow better accounting and better budget preparation.
9. How will it change human resources processing at UWF?

By using Web for Employees, documents required to transact Human Resources business can be originated on the web for any off-site location, transmitted electronically to a supervisory authority, and ultimately processed immediately through Banner without the additional step of manual processing. For example: employees may fill out their time sheets/leave reports online, obtain a supervisor’s approval online, and then directly populate the payroll system with the number of hours worked for compensation purposes. Simultaneously, employees will have their leave accruals and use documented in Banner. In addition, employees using leave will receive an immediate notification if leave balances are insufficient to cover the leave they are entering on their time sheet/leave report. Banner will also advise employees regarding their eligibility for overtime during the time sheet process. Permanent time records will be housed in Banner and can be updated electronically. This process of electronic transmittal and approval of forms will also expedite other Human Resources processes (e.g., action sheets, essential documents – W-4 and I-9, and benefits forms). A paperless environment with electronic approvals will provide immediate service and time savings associated with paper handling and filing.

Prospective employees may be entered into the Banner System as a person during the employment application process. This added feature could ease some of the payroll deadlines by having demographic information already in Banner when a person is made an employee. Banner also provides the opportunity for multiple employee phone numbers and addresses in the demographic information.

Reports on Human Resources data are easily created using Excel spreadsheet formatting. Human Resources will be able to provide a greater variety of information in a more timely manner.

The encumbrance system in Banner will more accurately reflect the expenditures by position, which will reduce the need to manipulate personnel appointments to achieve a budgetary goal. Banner will warn Human Resources when a personnel appointment is being made without sufficient budget. The integration of Human Resources, Budget, and Finance will provide for more expedient payroll/personnel transactions.
10. How will it affect payroll and benefits processing? Since time reporting is automated in Banner, employees will not have to complete their time sheets before the end of the pay period. Also, this automation will allow the University to change its payroll calendar to have all time information submitted at the same time, rather than the current staggered process. Work weeks will be altered to reflect a Sunday through Saturday period for Fair Labor Standards Act compliance purposes.

Payroll transactions can be entered in Banner by Human Resources with advance effective dates which will assist in meeting payroll deadlines.

Employee pay, time, and yearly wage information may all be viewed online by employees.

Employee benefit choices, excluding pre-tax benefits, will be handled entirely via the Banner system, which will improve customer service in this area by excluding third party handling.

Banner will allow payroll to be run through the system at any time, allowing immediate checks to employees who did not receive their compensation during the regular payroll cycle.

Banner allows the University to decide if employee benefits can be paid by the University during times when employees are experiencing an emergency which might reduce their pay check to the point where benefits would not be provided. This would be a great advantage for employees who might otherwise have their insurance cancelled.
11. How will it affect sponsored research administration?

For pre-award administration, activities will be improved by the implementation of the Banner system primarily by the assistance in accessing accurate information for preparation of budget proposals; capability for Excel & Access uploads and downloads; and the scheduling of narrative and financial reports. The Banner system will allow unlimited line item budgets within categories with a roll-up to provide data in desired form for reporting and billing. The system will have the capability to format budget proposals into the standard templates required by major Federal agencies, and will allow unlimited ability for the Principal Investigators to design "what if" or contingency scenarios and assess impact on project. The incorporation of the online signature authorization capability will be an additional advantage to the Banner system.

When SCT Banner is fully implemented and end users have been trained in its effective use, post-award accounting will be simplified and more efficient due to automation. The principal advance will be in "life to date" management. It will still be possible to see current year data only, however there is no reason to access this data when managing grants. The life to date ledger will be real-time, including posting of indirect costs on a transaction by transaction basis – i.e. indirect cost will be calculated and posted with each expenditure. Additionally, the requirement to delete budget from the current year and post it to the new year is eliminated. This saves two major transactions as well as time spent by staff. Available funds will be "reserved" from the time the requisition is forwarded from the Principal Investigator's office, eliminating the need for a secondary procedure to track requisitions in process and their affect on available balance. Complete access to transaction history will be simplified: no longer will we have to go to more than one screen to get all the information we need about history, requisition number, purchase order numbers, invoices, check number, etc. There will be other advances in grant management, but from the Principal Investigator's perspective these are the principal advantages.
12. What is “Luminis” and the “web portal?”

A web “portal” is a web site that provides a customized and personalized view of an institution’s web information space. Universities typically use web portals to provide all members of their communities with information tailored to those individuals’ specific roles with the university. Information is delivered through a web portal via “channels” customized for specific audiences. Once a person logs into the web portal, he or she sees a customized information environment where only those channels pertinent to his or her roles (e.g., student, faculty member, alumnus, etc.) are displayed. Further, the portal can be personalized by the person to further alter the channels displayed and the configuration of those channels.

Along with SCT Banner, UWF also licensed SCT’s Luminis web portal product. Banner’s web-based self-service features will be delivered through the Luminis environment. Beyond Banner, UWF is also using Luminis to provide a university-wide web portal to better integrate UWF’s web information services. Integration of UWF’s web environment via a portal is a key objective of the Information Technology Strategic Plan.

Melanie Haveard and Geissler Golding are leading the Luminis implementation effort. Luminis will be available in early 2005, with initial versions of the web portal concentrating on services for students and faculty.

13. What are Banner “data marts”?

A data mart is a mini version of a data warehouse. So what is a data warehouse? A data warehouse is a comprehensive repository of data about all items of interest to a business or enterprise. A data warehouse contains static information (i.e., it doesn’t change) and has a historical view of that information over time.

A data mart is a single-subject data warehouse. Banner provides data marts for each of its modules, so UWF will have a finance data mart and a human resources data mart. The data marts will contain information designed to be easily queried and extracted by non-specialists, enabling ad hoc reporting to meet a wide variety of information needs. A majority of the reports that UWF will produce from Banner-resident data will originate from the information stored in the data marts.

Initially, the data marts will be used to produce standard reports from Banner. However, UWF will also be licensing a general-purpose reporting tool that can utilize the information in the data marts, and this tool will be made available to employees who have a need to access and report against the information in Banner.

14. How will I know how to use Banner and the new processes?

Extensive training on Banner, and the revised work processes that will utilize Banner, will begin in early 2004. A comprehensive training schedule will be defined to ensure UWF employees receive the training they need to use Banner effectively. Watch for announcements in ThENews and other electronic publications regarding ongoing Banner workshops and seminars.
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<th>15. How will I know when the changes are occurring?</th>
<th>The Banner project schedule is maintained at the Banner web site (<a href="http://uwf.edu/uwfbanner">http://uwf.edu/uwfbanner</a>) and will be constantly updated as the project unfolds. Announcements will also be posted on the university events calendar accessible from the UWF home page (uwf.edu) and from NAUTICAL (nautical.uwf.edu). Announcements will also be posted in ThENews.</th>
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<td>16. How will I get help with Banner?</td>
<td>Various resources will be available to help with use of Banner. Banner documentation will be available over the web, and UWF-specific procedure manuals will also be published. This and other information will be housed at the new Guide to Information Technology at UWF, a comprehensive resource being built by ITS to cover all aspects of using information technology at UWF. When released in early 2004, the Guide will be available on the web at <a href="http://itguide.uwf.edu">http://itguide.uwf.edu</a>. Banner training sessions and workshops will occur as the release of Banner nears. A support structure, consisting of the ITS Support Center, ITS Help Desk, and ITS Liaisons will provide various consulting and assistance services related to Banner. ITS Liaisons will be the resident experts in the functionality of their assigned modules of Banner, and will address functional questions. The ITS Support Center and Help Desk will address technical questions. Information on the availability of these resources will be posted in ThENews and on the Banner project web site at <a href="http://uwf.edu/uwfbanner">http://uwf.edu/uwfbanner</a>.</td>
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<td>17. What must I have in order to use Banner?</td>
<td>Banner is used via the web, so an appropriately-configured computer with a web browser and Internet access is all that’s required to use Banner. Access to Banner will require a Banner-authorized ArgoNet account. Gaining access to Banner will also require successful completion of Banner training. As the time for release of Banner draws near, more information will be made available regarding these processes and procedures.</td>
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<td>18. Are there other plans for Banner in the future?</td>
<td>UWF is currently investigating the possibility of using additional Banner modules for student information processing; this effort is being led by Interim Provost Wesley Little and Vice President for Student Affairs Deborah Ford. However, the effort to implement additional Banner modules would not commence until some time in 2005.</td>
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19. How do I find more information about Banner and the UWF Banner Project?

The best place to look for Banner information is the Banner project web site at http://uwf.edu/uwfbanner.

You may also contact the ITS Help Desk with questions (helpdesk@uwf.edu or 474-2057).

Questions may also be addressed to any member of the Banner Steering Committee or Coordinating Committee.

Finally, you can also email questions to the Banner project at uwfbanner@uwf.edu.

20. Who should I contact if I have concerns about Banner?

The Banner Coordinating Committee, chaired by Betsy Bowers, is prepared to respond to Banner-related concerns. Depending upon the issue, the Coordinating Committee may additionally consult with the Steering Committee or other members of the Banner team.

You may also contact Michael Dieckmann, Executive Sponsor of the Banner Project, or either of the two Project Leaders – Colleen Asmus or Barbara Daley.

You may also send questions to the Banner project at uwfbanner@uwf.edu.

For more information on Banner and the UWF Banner Project, consult the project web site at http://uwf.edu/uwfbanner.