Names of Project Leader(s) and Team Members:

Project Leader: Mary Livaudais, Director, Academic Information Systems
Team Members: Pradeep Singh
Users: Asirra Suigita, Student Business Services
        Patsy Anderson, Financial Aid
        LaRae Lundgren, AVC Enrollment Management

Project Summary:

UCR offers a secure, “one-stop” web interface for student access to enrollment, grades, financial aid processing, billing information & payments, and messages relating to advising, supplemental instructional information, and other administrative data and systems. This interface (that is credit card enabled for payment of student fees) is commonly known as GROWL.

The Authorized User component of GROWL, while developed primarily to allow students to designate third parties (parents, grandparents, employers, etc) to make credit card payments on their accounts, also allows students to permit access to as much or as little of other GROWL information as they choose. Students can not only designate Authorized Users to make payments on their accounts, they can also authorize those parties to view their grades, financial aid awards, account assessments and balances, or block access to any or all...
**display data.** With the exception of making credit card payments, authorized users are prohibited from making any updates to the student data.

On the same GROWL screen that authorizes users to view student data, students can authorize parties to discuss their otherwise private data with university administrative offices. For example, the students can permit the Financial Aid office to discuss their financial aid information with the student, or Student Business Services to discuss, Student Billing information etc. The administrative offices each have their own SIS screen displaying the release authorization.

**Project Description:**

**Background**

Prior to GROWL accepting and processing credit card payments, students received paper statements. A billing address field in SIS effectively allowed students to have their paper statements sent to the address of their choice. Therefore, students could designate an alternate person to make payments on their account. UCR’s Student Business Services (“SBS”) created the bills on a predetermined basis and transmitted the bills through the U.S. Postal Service. The payers would either pay on the student’s account by sending a check through the mail, or pay in person at the SBS cashier’s office.

In 2003, the paper account statement was placed online on GROWL, and in 2004, GROWL was enhanced to take credit card payments on student accounts. *Since GROWL was the only place accepting credit card payments, third party payers were required to continue making payments via check to SBS, and paper statements through the mail were still required.*

This procedure presented issues for the payers and SBS:

**Payers:**

- Third party payers could not make card payments
- Insufficient student information on check caused delay in posting to proper student account
- Using U.S. Postal Service posed inherent delays

**SBS:**

- Processing checks manually strained SBS human resources
- In-person transactions caused long lines at the cashier’s counter
- Improperly identified checks caused posting problems
- Reconciliation was manual, time consuming, and error-prone

In addition, parents wanted to view grades, financial aid and other information to ensure they were getting their education money’s worth!
Solution:

The infrastructure supporting GROWL was changed so that the web visual presentation is completely under the control of a set of design mapping tables. These tables make the GROWL student and authorized user access completely scalable in that functions and features can be completely added or removed in GROWL, or made authorizable or not, without any programming changes to the GROWL authorization process. A simple entry in a table will make new GROWL features available for authorization.

Students access the Authorization function via the GROWL interface. Using a “fill in the blank” process, students authorize parents, employers, or other people by adding a record, and assigning them a PIN. Updates are performed real-time, and GROWL access becomes immediately available to the authorized user. Students are the sole controllers of their authorized users, and set up PINs, initial email address, and range of access. Access can be granted indefinitely, or assigned an end date. End dates can be assigned to specific screens, or a whole category of screens (e.g. Registrar screens or Billing screens). If access to a function is end dated, authorized users will not be presented with options to display those screens, after the ending date has passed.

When authorized users sign in, they are presented with only those buttons, on the left-hand navigation bar, that their students have granted them access. Except for making payment on account, authorized users are prohibited from submitting any updates to the students records.
The same programs that display the students’ GROWL screens are used to display the screens the authorized users’ screens. Control of this common set of programs is maintained through a combination of system tables and the individual authorizations. This control is what makes the authorized user function completely scalable. As new functions are added for students, they become immediately available to the student for authorization.

**Benefits of New System**

- User friendly, easy to use – First authorization occurred within 15 minutes of deployment
- Reduction in actual monetary expenditures (postage)
- Reduction in man-power at Cashier’s counter
- Reduction in man-power in Registrar’s Office to re-enroll students dropped from classes when payment arrived late or was unidentifiable
- Scaleable – Increasing or decreasing functionality of GROWL does not require changes to the authorization program
- Assessable – Tangible and intangible ROI
  - Postage
  - Human Resources
  - Student/3rd party satisfaction
- Unique – Structural changes designed to facilitate authorization of credit card payments scaled to the ability to authorize ANY function within GROWL.
- Reduced Paperwork
Technology Utilized in the Project:

IBM Mainframe; CICS, VSAM Files, Web Services
Tables defining display structure and program control.

Timeframe of Implementation:

Work on the concept and design began in May, 2006.
The process was deployed to students in November, 2006.

Objective Customer Satisfaction Data

“I must say the accomplishment of the GROWL Authorized User project has been such an added improvement for the Financial Aid office...”

“Our entire office has benefited from this project and has made our life much easier, let alone the students and parents.”

--Barbara Colacino
Assistant Director, Operations
Financial Aid Office

“The GROWL Authorized User screen has proved to be a valuable system. Creating a system where the students can grant an ‘authorized person’ to view their records, discuss their accounts or pay their student account was an excellent idea. It eliminates the staff from having a parent, for example, upset that we are unable to assist them without a student’s authorization. If this does happen, the parents have the students simply go to GROWL and complete the ‘easy’ access form and wahla, parents, or whomever they chose, have access. Both students and parents have expressed their love of GROWL in general. I wish I had some written testimonies of this to be able to send along, but verbally I have been given their “thumbs up” on GROWL and all its entirety.”

--Suzanne Bailey
Campus Cashier Manager
University of California, Riverside

From the SBS prospective:

“Our Staff love it. A common scenario is for SBS to receive a call from a parent or other relative with questions on a student’s account and we are not able to assist them because we do not have authorization. We usually give our FERPA speech on how we cannot release information which only frustrates the parents even more. Before authorized user all we could offer the parent was for the student to come in and sign a release (which was many times prohibitive if the student was not on campus or was very busy with classes and such and did not have time), mail or fax back and forth the release form (many students do not have fax machines). All of these options took time which was very frustrating to a parent who needed answers right away or needed to pay by the deadline. Now we have ‘authorized users’ which
students are able to access from any computer via GROWL and grant their parents access to their account in a matter of minutes.”

“… parents have commented that it’s easy and they like being able to pay online without giving their CC number to their student.”

“… students have commented that it is much easier now to give their parents access and they like that they don’t have to give them access to grades.”

--Asirra Suguitan
Assistant Director, Student Business Services
University of California, Riverside

Benchmarking Data

The first authorization occurred within 15 minutes of deployment (with no advertisement).

To date, over 1,035 third party individuals have been authorized by students to view their GROWL data.

925Parents
35 Spouses
4 Grandparents
7 Employers
64 “Others”

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