PESC prepares for submission of XML Postsecondary Transcript to X12

At the February 2003 American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Accredited Standards Committee (ASC) X12 meeting, representatives of PESC, the XML Forum for Education, and the higher education community will submit the XML Postsecondary Transcript for review and approval. This means that once reviewed and approved—a process normally taking several months—the XML Postsecondary Transcript will become an X12 standard. Discussions have already begun regarding introduction of the transcript to X12, the review process, and notification to appropriate X12 leadership is underway.

The XML Postsecondary Transcript is the result of collaborative efforts between PESC’s XML Forum and AACRAO’s SPEEDE Committee, the original pioneers in higher education standardization. This effort signifies a key strategic effort and direction for PESC. Founded in 1918, the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) is a private, non-profit organization that administers and coordinates the U.S. voluntary standardization and conformity assessment system. ANSI’s mission is to enhance both the global competitiveness of U.S. business and the U.S. quality of life by promoting and facilitating voluntary consensus standards and conformity assessment systems, and safeguarding their integrity. In 1979, ANSI chartered X12 to develop uniform standards for interindustry electronic exchange of business transactions, EDI, and X12 is now expanding to include XML.

X12 is comprised of nine subcommittees: Education Administration, Communications and Control, Finance, Government, Materials Management, Transportation, Technical Assessment, Procurement and Distribution, and Insurance. The Chair and Vice Chair are supported by a Steering Committee that oversees Policies and Procedures, Convergence and Outreach, and Process Improvement. The Procedures Review Board is another group that has primary responsibility to ensure that due process is followed before the approval of new project proposals, the release of documents for voting, and approval of X12’s work products for publication. Submission of the XML Postsecondary Transcript will be done through and facilitated by the Education Administration Subcommittee.

For more information on ANSI or X12, please visit www.ANSI.org and www.X12.org.
XML Forum Update

The plans and agenda for the February 2003 meeting of the XML Forum are presently being finalized. The tentative agenda includes:

**Core Components**
- Core Re-usable Objects: Address and resolve all outstanding issues; provide an overview/explanation/status of this core, identify version, location of documentation, dependencies (why this is important), and next steps.
- Core and Sector Libraries: Identify and document the structural relationship between the core and sector libraries; provide an overview/explanation/status of this relationship, identify version, location of documentation, dependencies (why this is important), and next steps.
- Financial Aid Atomic Elements: Must be added to the main dictionary; must be aggregated into re-usable blocks; provide an overview/explanation/status of this effort, identify version, location of documentation, dependencies (why this is important), and next steps.

**Transcript**
- Provide an overview/explanation/status of the transcript; identify version, location of documentation, dependencies (why this is important), maintenance, and next steps. Note that finalization of the transcript is dependent on finalization of Core Components actions.

**Transcript Submission to X12**
- Overview and explanation of the process, requirements, timelines.

**Activities Tracking**
- Propose new system for monitoring, tracking, communicating all activities of the XML Forum.

**PESC Web Services**
- With the PESC Web Services workgroup hitting their first milestone, provide an overview of the workgroups first working draft of a white paper.

**Speaker: Technology Issues in Higher Education**

Other items may be added as needed, but the above will definitely be included. Note that while in the past, the XML Forum had split up into different groups that met concurrently, for this meeting, our goal is to keep everyone together in one group. There are so many interdependencies among all the pieces and people, that it seems to be more productive to meet together as one group. As there will be another room available to us, we retain the option to hold additional meetings, if needed.

This meeting of the XML Forum will be held on the campus of the University of California at San Francisco from 9 am, Monday, Feb. 10 to 5 pm, Tuesday, Feb. 11. The campus site where we'll be meeting is located in Laurel Heights, a historic part of San Francisco, and is within walking distance of many shops and restaurants that overlook the Bay.
Letter from the Chair

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

So, what resolutions are you going to break in 2003? Did you promise yourself that you’re going to lose weight? Quit smoking? Read more books? Advance industry standards setting efforts? How long will you keep your resolutions? Or have you just given up on making resolutions so that you won’t be disappointed when you break them? Why not make this year different and make resolutions that you can keep?

How do I make resolutions I can keep? I’m glad you asked. Just like I can’t lose 30 pounds all at once (ruling out liposuction), we can’t become standards compliant organizations overnight. So how will I lose 30 pounds this year and how will we make our organizations’ standards compliant by Dec. 31? I won’t and we won’t! Neither of those resolutions is attainable.

The key is to resolve to take small, achievable steps toward the final goal. For example, if I set an achievable goal of losing two pounds per month, I can achieve a larger goal of losing 20 pounds this year (allowing me two months of backsliding). Likewise, when we set goals of implementing standard file formats or exchange protocols with our next application upgrade, or participating in the XML Forum this year so that our needs will be represented in the formats when we need them next year, we are well on our way to an ultimate long-term goal of being a standards compliant organization.

Many of you have told me that you think standards are the answer to a number of our problems, but that you just don’t have the resources to enact large changes. Instead, won’t you resolve to take achievable steps this year toward enhancing industry standards? As this year progresses, I hope that you’ll keep in mind how your actions advance, or impede, the progress of industry standards. Many times throughout the year we will be faced with opportunities and key decisions that will help our organizations become more standards-supportive and compliant. The decisions may be with whom to partner, what technologies to employ in a new application, what data formats to support, or even what services to offer. Whether the decision at hand is passing up on another piece of pie, or lending our support in bringing about greater industry collaboration, we all need to keep in mind how our actions will help or hinder our progress toward our ultimate goals.

Good luck this year, I’m counting on all of us to succeed.

Sincerely,

Keith Riccitelli
Chair
PESC Board of Directors
Barmak Nassirian
Associate Executive Director,
External Communications
AACRAO

Barmak Nassirian has served as Associate Executive Director with AACRAO since 1998. In this capacity, his responsibilities include the Association's professional development, research, and government and public affairs activities. Prior to joining AACRAO, he was Director of Federal Policy Analysis with the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. Barmak served as a member of the PESC Steering Committee (now the Board of Directors) in its inaugural year.

What is American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officer’s mission and or goals and what type of outreach does it perform?

The mission of the Association is to provide professional development, guidelines and voluntary standards regarding best practices in records management, admissions, enrollment management, administrative information technology and student services. It also provides a forum for campus officials to develop, interpret and implement campus policies. Finally, AACRAO advocates on behalf of its members before Congress and the Administration.

AACRAO disseminates information through conferences and workshops, publications, periodicals, and its content-rich website. We have been quite successful in deploying technologies such as streaming video, online learning modules, and distance delivered professional development events.

What are the main challenges AACRAO and its members face? How are the challenges being addressed?

First and foremost, our members face the challenge of doing more with less. While by no means unique to higher education, the impact of the economic slow down is being more severely felt on campuses because it coincides with increased demand. The combination of demographic increases in the number of traditional students and expanded demand for life-long learning are producing record application volumes and enrollment numbers. At the same time, budget cuts, negative returns on endowments, and diminished ability-to-pay on the part of families are reducing the resources available to institutions to accomplish their mission.

Second, the traditional manner in which administrative functions in higher education have been organized is rapidly evolving. Partly as a result of efforts at improved service delivery and partly for efficiency and productivity reasons, many institutions are reorganizing student services. Our membership has been particularly involved in the recent trend away from functional stovepipes in favor of integrated “one-stop shop” enrollment services units.
The comprehensive re-evaluation of traditional organizational arrangements—admissions, financial aid, registrar, bursar, etc.—has been a major challenge for AACRAO members.

Third, selection, implementation and optimal use of administrative information technology has been a major preoccupation of campus enrollment officials for the past few years. Campuses have adopted different approaches to the demand for faster, more convenient, less expensive ways of performing such traditional enrollment functions as admissions and registration, and our members have been deeply engaged in the search for innovative solutions for their respective campuses.

Finally, federal and state mandates continue to expand in number and complexity of compliance. AACRAO members are key compliance officials on regulatory mandates such as privacy of educational records, federal and state student aid, veterans benefits, graduation rates, crime reporting, immigration issues, etc.

Identity theft, fraud, accurate reporting, the "war," all issues that affect admissions and registrars. What are the impacts and is enough being done to mitigate them?

Integrity of academic records and credentials has been an area of primary concern to AACRAO members. Identity theft, document fraud, and related issues are nothing new as such. What is new is the availability of new technologies—the Internet, digital scanners, color printers—that make misrepresentation and fraud easier to commit and harder to detect. Colleges and universities have managed well on this particular front so far.

Obviously, additional effort is needed, and AACRAO has attempted to assist institutions. We just recently received the report of our taskforce on transcription issues, and one of the most important topics of their deliberations had to do with the use of social security numbers on transcripts. We are also quite active on issues related to security and privacy of records and have a number of publications on these.

One of the issues that has confronted campus officials with increasing frequency over the past decade is the call-up of reservists, many of whom are students. We have worked with other higher education associations to ensure that institutions properly accommodate students who are called up for service. On a related topic, colleges have received numerous law enforcement requests for federally-protected records since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and we have worked with Congress and the Administration to provide clear compliance guidelines for use in such cases.

Is current legislation sufficient enough and is it meeting the need? Are there any major concerns about current legislation (ie. SEVIS, USA Patriot Act, privacy, security, etc.)

We have a number of legislative priorities, including simplification of some of the more counter-intuitive mandates that federal law imposes on our membership. It would be quite timely for Congress to review such mandates as voter registration, various categories of consumer-style reporting requirements, and see whether any policy purpose is being served by these.

Even such important federal mandates as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) should be reviewed and streamlined. We view the modifications made to FERPA in the USA-PATRIOT Act as quite appropriate, and believe the main challenge is to ensure that law enforcement agencies seeking private records follow the process authorized in the new law. SEVIS is less a legislative challenge at this point.
than a technology issue. We are hopeful that the community can work with the Immigration and Naturalization Service to fully implement SEVIS, and would hope additional improvements can be made down the road.

**Is there a day when admissions and registrar functions will be completely electronic?**

No, but I think the day isn’t that far off when the vast majority of functions will be electronic. We have already made huge gains in this direction through such innovations as document imaging, electronic applications, electronic transcript exchange, web-based grade reporting and look-up, web-based course bulletins and course schedules, and web-based/touchtone registration.

**What are the barriers?**

We will need an even more radical change in campus culture, particularly among the faculty. Beyond this, broad social access to new technologies has to predate a wholesale shift to electronic services in areas such as admissions. As always, resources end up being the determining factor.

**How much of an admissions/registrar world is "paper"?**

Too much. We still have a long way to go in implementing currently-existing technology, let alone emerging solutions. Of course, there is no easy answer here because of disparities in resources and skills. Some institutions have highly automated admissions/registrar operations, while others are still highly manual and paper-based.

Many of a University’s services are now Web-enabled through various portals and electronic services, however, in most cases they vary greatly from administrative office to administrative office as well as from school to school. Since admissions and registration is often affected by several other departments/entities, is AACRAO working with its members to bring continuity to electronic processing? Are its members more concerned with a community-wide best practice or is their focus mainly on their individual institutions?

A number of services are so fully contained within each institution’s control that unilateral solutions are possible. These tend to be post-admissions functions that students can access using the institution’s infrastructure. Other functions, such as admissions or transcripts, clearly involve other parties and community-wide solutions and standards are needed. It is important to note that even with matriculated students, other parties—agencies of the federal government, banks, and others—are still involved. As a national association, AACRAO focuses mainly on the bigger picture intra-institutional issues that no one institution can possibly resolve on its own. Development of functional standards, guidelines and recommendations is an important AACRAO responsibility.

**How can AACRAO and PESC work better together in the future?**

The AACRAO SPEEDE Committee has been very engaged in PESC activities, and has contributed tremendously to the success of PESC. As new issues arise, new opportunities for collaboration present themselves. SEVIS is the most recent example of such an opportunity.
PESC announces theme for its annual conference

At its monthly meeting last week, the PESC Board of Directors selected “Paving the Way for Electronic Standards in Higher Education” as the theme for PESC’s 5th Annual Conference. This year the conference will be held at the Hilton Alexandria Old Town starting at 8:30 am on Wednesday, May 7 and concluding at noon on Thursday, May 8.

The Hilton, located at 1767 King Street, is located within minutes of the Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA), directly across the street from the King Street Metro Stop (Blue and Yellow Metro lines, and Amtrak), and many shops, stores, restaurants and cafes are within walking distance. Conference and hotel registration information will be made available shortly, so stay tuned.

A conference committee is being formed to help develop the agenda, program and sessions for the conference. The first conference committee meeting will be held this month.

PESC is also looking to see if members, affiliates and others organizations are interested in sponsoring events and items for the conference (such as breakfasts and breaks).

Individuals interested in either serving on the conference committee or in sponsoring the conference should contact Michael Sessa at Sessa@StandardsCouncil.org

Technology Tidbits and Standard Snippets

- President George Bush signed H.R. 2458, the "E-Government Act of 2002," Dec. 18. The legislation seeks to grow e-government by providing a framework for information security standards and programs and expands on the use of the Internet and computer resources in government services. The Act also authorizes agencies to award "share-in-savings" contract under which contractors share in the savings achieved by agencies through the provision of technologies that improve or accelerate their work. The Department of Education was the first federal agency to enter into a share in savings contract when it partnered with Accenture for the retirement of the Central Data System.

- Datatel, Inc., recently announced that its SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) Batch Software successfully passed its test with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) mandatory regulations, which go into effect Jan. 30, 2003. SEVIS is a mandatory reporting system developed by INS to admit, track, and report international students and exchange visitors electronically to the INS. Datatel, which has worked closely with the INS via the Postsecondary Electronics Standards Council, has played a key role in ensuring that SEVIS schemas are in line with existing higher education industry standards.

- W3C last month released the User Agent Accessibility Guidelines (UAAG) 1.0 to help developers make Web browsers and multimedia players accessible to disabled individuals. In addition, UAAG 1.0 also addresses interoperability of browsers and multimedia players with technologies used to assist the disabled. Also in December, the group announced that version 1.2 of the Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP) has moved to the candidate recommendation phase, could reach the Proposed Recommendation phase by the end of this month, and become a formal recommended standard in March. Lastly, it moved XML Namespaces 1.1 to the Candidate Recommendation phase.

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system for designating XML Schema components. The document addresses a range of problematic issues in the use of a QName to designate schema components as defined in the W3C XML Schema Recommendation.

- PerfectXML.com is in the process of creating a type of cheat sheet for XML. In its 100 questions on XML, the site offers user friendly answers to a number of XML-based questions that could be used in preparing a presentation, or refreshing skills and knowledge. The first part, which is available at http://www.perfectxml.com/Interview1.asp, presents 20 questions to assess the basic concepts, including useful tools such as a sample XML script. Additional parts including: XML implementation questions specific to Microsoft platform; Java XML; Web services concepts; and advanced design/implementation questions will be added in the coming weeks.

- The World Wide Web Consortium has approved XML Encryption Syntax and Processing, and Decryption Transform for XML Signature specifications. The two specifications will enable Web pages using XML to encrypt parts of a document being exchanged between websites. While other methods exist for encrypting XML documents, the W3C’s specifications make it possible to encrypt selected sections or elements of a document—for example, a social security number entered in an XML form.

- The recent signing of the Navy’s Extensible Markup Language policy by chief information officer David Wennergren sets the standard for how XML will be used within the service. The policy's overall goals are to promote XML as a technology to help achieve interoperability throughout the Navy and serve as a guideline to support interoperability among the Navy and other DOD components.

- Due to the nature of web services, many traditional point-to-point security tools are not effective. Web services need an end-to-end security solution, so it is not affected by the nodes the message crosses. WS-Security is a proposed standard format for carrying security-related information in a SOAP message. WS-Security builds on W3C encryption and digital signature specifications by tailoring them to SOAP. WS-Security defines XML structures for security tokens that clients can use to claim an identity or some privilege. WS-Security tokens include username, binary and security token reference.

- Work continues on the first annual "AACRAO Technology Conference: Implementing Technology in Student Systems and Service," scheduled for Austin, Texas on October 19-21, 2003. Dave Stones (Southwestern University) is pleased to announce that the following individuals have agreed to serve on the Conference Advisory Committee: Suzanne Anderson (Northwestern Univ.), Jerry Bracken (Brigham Young Univ.), Herb Chereck (U. of Oregon), Bruce Marton (U. of Texas at Austin), Jacqueline Nottingham (Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State Univ.), Rick Skeel (U. of Oklahoma), Shelby Stanfield (U. of Texas at Austin), Tom Stewart (Miami-Dade Community College), Roger Thompson (U. of Alabama), and James Wager (Penn State Univ.). Wally Reeves (UT Austin) will be handling local arrangements. If you have program suggestions, you may send them directly to Dave at stonesd@southwestern.edu

A consortium of high-profile tech firms have picked a technology that will serve as a standard for connecting electronic devices to the Net through electrical outlets.

The HomePlug Powerline Alliance has chosen a technology by a little-known firm called Intellon that will allow consumers to use their homes' internal electrical networks as the medium to share Internet access, play video games, talk on the phone, and enjoy movies and music throughout the house.

The "powerline" alliance, made up of 36 companies, represents the latest effort to create networking standards for the home. Two previous coalitions have created standards for wireless and phoneline connections in the home. A phoneline networking kit, for example, allows PCs to network with one another by plugging them into regular phone jacks.

—Source: news.com