DTS v. 2.0 and XML Transcript Request & Response Approved as PESC Standards

The Board of Directors and Steering Committee of PESC are pleased to announce the release of the web-services based Data Transport Standard (DTS) version 2.0 and XML based Transcript Request and Response as PESC Member-Approved National Education Community Standards. All final and supporting documentation will be available at www.PESC.org shortly. This effort marks a significant milestone and achievement for the education community, the Standards Forum for Education, and for PESC.

PESC Members that approved the Data Transport 2.0 and Transcript Request/Response Specifications include:

- American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO)
- AcademyOne
- California Community College System
- Central Connecticut State University
- Citibank
- College Board
- Consumer Bankers Association (CBA)
- Datatel
- Georgetown University
- Hyland Software
- Iowa State University
- Law School Admission Council (LSAC)
- Mapping Your Future
- National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA)
- National Association of Student Loan Administrators (NASLA)
- National Council of Higher Education Loan Programs (NCHelp)
- National Student Clearinghouse
- Nelnet
- Ontario College Application Services (OCAS)
- Oracle Corporation
- Pennsylvania College of Technology
- Sallie Mae
- Smart Catalog
- SunGard Higher Education
- University of Denver
- University of Idaho
- University of Illinois - Student Financial Services
- University of Illinois at Chicago
- University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign
- University of Mississippi
- University of Oklahoma
- University of Texas at Austin
- USA Funds
- US Department of Education
- Wachovia Education Finance
- XAP Corporation

See Standard, Page 2
PESC Technical Advisory - Notes from Montreal

The Technical Advisory Board (TAB) arrived in Montreal with an extensive agenda of items for discussion and presentation at its face-to-face meeting.

The TAB’s initial agenda consisted of a presentation of Work Requests assigned to the TAB, their status, and the results of draft recommendations. This was followed by a discussion of the overall state of the PESC Guidelines for XML Architecture and Data Modeling (the Guidelines). The TAB is concerned because the Guidelines were created in 2001, with revisions in 2003-04, and were based on best practice recommendations from established XML experts. At that time, however, the TAB could not find any organization with practical experience with XML implementations. The TAB needs to research if any part of the Guidelines should be revisited because it is no longer relevant or is incorrect in one or more of its facets.

However, TAB members attended sessions of the workgroups also meeting in Montreal and came away with additional items to work on. During the workgroup sessions TAB members noted a clear need to be involved with workgroups earlier in the standards creation process. The TAB also noted the need to improve communication of completed TAB work, such as Work Requests, to PESC members.

To further improve the overall quality of PESC standards, the TAB will:

- Review and improve the current PESC Guidelines for XML Architecture and Data Modeling.

- First create a brief, bulleted, high-level summary of the Guidelines. This creates a reference members will find quicker and easier to use. Members can use the detailed version or contact the TAB directly if they require information in more detail. After this is done the TAB will review and where necessary update the Guidelines.

- Modify current Standards Forum procedures to involve the TAB directly with workgroups earlier in the standards creation process.

One possibility is to move the TAB from weekly calls to a call every two weeks, allowing one or more TAB members to participate in workgroup calls as needed, without necessarily increasing their workload from PESC-related activities.

- Improve the communication of TAB work to the PESC community.

The TAB will work with the Steering Committee to improve this communications process.

- Review and improve the overall data model / schema structure.

PESC currently uses a tiered structure of schemas, composed of the Core schema as well as the schemas of various industry sectors. While this continues to work from a modeling and structure standpoint, this model continues to create problems for toolsets used to develop practical XML applications. PESC needs to migrate from this model to one that lends itself to the creating of efficient applications but uses the complex and simple data definitions that PESC has already created and implemented.

- Research options for a shared workspace that can be used by TAB members as a collaborative working environment.

- Explore the potential for creating a “testbed” in which new standards can be tested prior to being released.

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**Standard, from Page 1**

PESC is in the process of updating its website so there will be a minor delay in the availability of final documentation. For any organization looking to communicate their specific use and implementation of PESC approved standards, please contact Michael Sessa or Jennifer Kim directly at Michael.Sessa@PESC.org 202-261-6516 or Jennifer.Kim@PESC.org 202-261-6514 respectively. For more information on PESC or PESC approved standards, please visit www.PESC.org.
Rick Skeel Honored with Milestone Achievement Award

Many, many people from the higher education community have helped shape PESC into the organization it is today. The success of PESC is due primarily to the valuable input and output (from white papers to approval and posting of standards) produced through community-staffed workgroups and committees who volunteer their time and effort. Certain individuals have gone above and beyond the call of duty and PESC takes the opportunity each spring to recognize these individuals by awarding them with Distinguished Service Awards.

At PESC’s 10th Anniversary, PESC Executive Director Michael Sessa made a toast to PESC during its momentous occasion and highlighted the efforts of one specific individual. One individual and the only individual to be present at both the original meeting on August 18, 1997 that founded PESC and at the 10th anniversary celebration held on Monday night during PESC’s Fall 2007 Summit in Montreal is Richard Skeel, Director of Academic Records at the University of Oklahoma and current PESC Board of Directors member. Rick has been involved with standards and AACRAO’s SPEEDE Committee (serving previously as Chair) for a number of years and as a solid contributor currently co-chairs PESC’s XML Course Inventory Development Workgroup.

For his longstanding commitment to standards and dedication to the higher education community, PESC awarded Rick with a special Milestone Achievement Award. Thank you Rick! We appreciate all you do!

PESC Workgroups are a Member Benefit

As you may know, participation in PESC workgroups is provided as a benefit of being a member organization in PESC. When an organization joins PESC as a member, any number of representatives from that organization can participate in any number of workgroups. The development and sharing of documentation, conference call services, and administrative support all come free once an organization joins PESC as a member. Membership in PESC also opens up a whole network of human and technical resources including access to data and system providers, to experts in technology and technical issues, and to discounted rates on meetings and conferences held throughout the year. A representative of a membership organization can also serve in a leadership role including Workgroup Chair, Steering Committee member, and Board of Directors member.

To ensure that PESC maintains valuable and cost-efficient services for the organizations that have joined as members and to maintain appropriate administrative support for members and workgroups, effective Monday January 7, 2008, the PESC Board of Directors will begin imposing its long-standing policy that restricts participation in PESC workgroups to those organizations that have joined PESC as members.

We also know that some organizations have joined our workgroups without becoming members of PESC. National, technical standards are necessary to ensure the efficient and quality exchange of data between colleges and universities and their trading partners. Building and implementing national standards takes a tremendous amount of effort, time, and above all, collaboration. This non-member participation in our workgroups has been valued as it helps build a more stable and usable national standard. Our goal is to maintain this participation in our workgroups and ensure that each organization currently participating as a non-member is able to become a member of PESC. To accomplish this, PESC is offering these organizations a 25% discounted rate for PESC membership effective now through January 4, 2008.

Those organizations that are impacted by this announcement have been notified separately and we are including this information again to ensure its awareness. As you and your organization may not be familiar with all of PESC’s events and workgroups, let us know if you’d like us to conduct a presentation that will provide you with an in-depth overview of PESC. If you are unsure as to whether or not this announcement applies to you and your organization or if you have questions or concerns, please contact either Michael Sessa at 202-261-6516 or at Michael.Sessa@PESC.org or Jennifer Kim at 202-261-6514 or at Jennifer.Kim@PESC.org.
EDUCAUSE Board Appoints Diana Oblinger President and CEO

The EDUCAUSE Board of Directors has announced that Diana G. Oblinger, vice president of EDUCAUSE, will become president and CEO of the association effective January 1, 2008. Oblinger succeeds Brian L. Hawkins, who has led EDUCAUSE since it was formed in 1998.

In making the announcement, John E. Bucher, chair of the board and chief technology officer at Oberlin College, said, "Diana Oblinger brings an impressive breadth and depth of experience to this critical leadership position-as an innovative leader and dedicated professional at several institutions; as a longtime active contributor to key higher education organizations, including EDUCAUSE; and as a forceful voice for change and advancement in the profession. Diana will bring vision and energy to moving EDUCAUSE into its second decade of realizing the mission of 'advancing higher education by promoting the intelligent use of information technology.'"

Oblinger has served as an EDUCAUSE vice president since 2004 and leads the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative. Prior to joining EDUCAUSE, she held positions in academia and business. She served as vice president for information resources and chief information officer for the 16-campus University of North Carolina system, and was a faculty member at Michigan State University and a faculty member and academic administrator at the University of Missouri-Columbia. She has been the recipient of both outstanding teaching and research awards. Oblinger is currently an adjunct professor of adult and higher education at North Carolina State University. Her corporate experience has included senior positions at IBM and Microsoft. Internationally known for her expertise in information technology and higher education, she has authored or edited numerous books and articles and is a popular keynote speaker. Oblinger holds BS, MS, and PhD degrees from Iowa State University.

Outgoing EDUCAUSE President Brian L. Hawkins announced in November 2006 that he planned to step down in order to give the board ample time for a thorough search and an orderly transition of leadership. "I have great confidence that Diana Oblinger will provide excellent leadership and will do an outstanding job in taking EDUCAUSE to the next level," he said. "I have worked with Diana for more than 15 years and know she will represent the profession extremely well, and will be sensitive to the needs of the entire membership. I wish her the very best in this important role."

Ms. Oblinger also served as a keynote speaker at the 3rd Annual Conference on Technology and Standards in Washington, D.C.

PESC's Seal of Approval

As the PESC community produces more standards, the Board of Directors wants to ensure some level of uniformity in implementation among trading partners. Unlike a certification program or a technologically advanced interoperability center, the Board believes that PESC’s first step in this effort should be realistic and not add additional burden or extraneous cost. As announced by the Board of Directors in Montreal at PESC’s Fall 2007 Summit, PESC has begun work on a Seal of Approval program which would depend on one trading partner’s endorsement of another trading partner. Once endorsement requirements are satisfied, PESC would provide a Seal of Approval. The entire process from application to issuance of a seal needs to be worked out...and PESC is looking for volunteers to form a group to help work on this program. We have a few volunteers already committed, but are looking for more volunteers. If you’re interested in helping PESC develop our Seal of Approval program, please contact Michael Sessa at Michael.Sessa@pesc.org or Bill.Hollowsky@sungardhe.com.
ED recently released guidance about the circumstances under which information about troubled students can be disclosed under FERPA. The guides state that FERPA permits educators to share confidential information with law-enforcement officers, medical personnel, and others without student consent when necessary to protect the health or safety of students or other individuals. In addition, institutions can disclose education records to parents if a health or safety emergency involves their son or daughter, according to the department’s interpretation of the privacy law. More information may be found at www.ed.gov.

The E-Authentication Solution program of the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) now mandates passing Liberty Alliance SAML 2.0 interoperability testing as a prerequisite for participating in the US E-Authentication Identity Federation. Countries building and deploying identity-based applications using Liberty Federation, which consists of ID-FF 1.1, 1.2 and SAML 2.0 specifications, include Austria, Australia, France, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, countries in the Middle East, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. For additional information, http://xml.coverpages.org/libertyAlliance.html.

The SPEEDE Server will handle XML now as long the same format is used by the sender and the receiver. UT is rewriting the Quick&Easy software...and then will look closer at the utility to translate between EDI and XML, yet no dates are currently available for this functionality.

In a multipart article titled, "Converting XML Schemas to Schematron." The author explained some reasons for wanting to convert XSD to

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September 2007 volume included: |
- 45,433 TS130 transcripts |
- 33,857 TS131 acknowledgements |
- 5,635 TS997 Functional acknowledgements |
- 33,068 TS189 Admission Applications |
- 16,476 TS138 test score reports |
- 156,529 total transactions |
Schematron in Part 1: (1) better diagnostics -- grammar-based diagnostics basically don't work; (2) Schematron only needs an XSLT implementation. From Part 5: "XSD allows you to derive your own simple datatypes by restricting the lexical space or the value space of the type. The rule about derivation by restriction is that everything that is valid against the derived type is also valid against the base type. Type derivation by restriction can be directly implemented by Schematron abstract rules. To access parts 1-5 in their entirety, visit http://www.oreillynet.com/xml/blog/2007/10/converting_xml_schemas_to_sche_4.html


Talks between Internet2 and National LambdaRail, the leading high-speed networks for researchers, fell apart after a meeting of LambdaRail's governing board. The union that never happened has spawned dark mutterings from both sides about bad behavior, and has left universities with the unhappy prospect of having to split scarce resources between two high-performance Internet providers, instead of consolidating them. The breakdown in talks seems to center on the legal structure of National LambdaRail and some fundamental incompatibilities with the structure of Internet2.

Excerpt from the memo requesting user feedback: "Since XML 1.1 became a W3C Recommendation in August 2006, there has been a substantial uptake of it as a peer of XML 1.0 in new and ongoing W3C work. This is appropriate, as XML 1.1 was explicitly not designed to replace XML 1.0, but to supplement it for the benefit of various groups against which XML 1.0 had unjustly, but unintentionally, discriminated. However, there are very few XML 1.1 documents in the wild. The XML Core WG believes this to be the result of a vicious cycle, in which widely distributed XML parsers do not support 1.1 because the parser authors believe that few document authors will use it. If XML 1.0 relaxed the restrictions on element and attribute names, those who preferred to retain the Appendix B constraints in their documents would be free to do so, but those who wish to use element and attribute names in languages normally written in any of the Ethiopic, Cherokee, Canadian Syllabics, Khmer, Mongolian, Yi, Philippine, New Tai Lue, Buginese, Syloti Nagri, N’Ko, and Tifinagh scripts will be able to do so, as will users of minority languages whose scripts appeared in Unicode 2.0 but were lacking essential letters for writing those languages... The XML Core WG assumes that if such an erratum were to be passed into XML 1.0, the XML 1.1 Recommendation would eventually be deprecated by the W3C. Paul Grosso, writing on behalf of the XML Core Working Group, notes that comments on all aspects of this possibility are earnestly solicited; please send them to the [publicly archived list] 'www-xml-blueberry-comments@w3.org'.
http://lists.w3.org/Archives/Public/www-xml-blueberry-
November 11, 2007, Rome Italy

Emerging International and European Group Encourages Data Exchange Standards to Support the Bologna Process

By David K. Moldoff, CEO and Founder of AcademyOne, Inc. and Board member of PESC, the Postsecondary Education Standards Council

Representatives from thirteen countries met in Rome, Italy on November 8-9, 2007 to discuss the assembly of common data exchange standards to support the goals of the Bologna Process. I attended the workshop as a representative from the United States, invited to present PESC and how AcademyOne in context, has supported and adopted specifications created by the PESC workgroups.

In order to establish a European Higher Education Area by 2010, 46 European states (January 2007) agreed with the Bologna Process on common aims concerning the restructuring of study programs and academic degrees at universities. Different measurements are about to be implemented to reach more comparability and compatibility for these study programs and academic degrees:

- Bachelor Degree and Master Degree Study Programs
- Modulation of Study Programs
- Increased International acceptance of exam certificates and study programs workloads – by use of Diploma Supplements and European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)
- Increased support for the mobility of students and lectures between universities.

The workshop was organized by members of several European software companies, universities, consortiums, associations and state run systems. Introductions and welcoming remarks were provided by Dott.ssa. Emanuela Stefani, CRUI’s Executive Director in Italy. Meeting in the CRUI’s executive conference center put into perspective the history, challenges, opportunities and interests of a diverse group getting together to align their data exchange ideas and approaches. The conference center was immense with fresco murals dating back over a thousand years. The Roman battles, led by Constantine in 300 AD, reveal how powerful the drive was to consolidate, standardize and sustain governance. It begged the question, what kind of battles do we face in order to achieve commonly accepted standards which can be used to support student mobility, economic development and efficient use of resources that will enable us to compete in the 21st century?

The battle to consolidate and standardize religion and trade across Italy lasted hundreds of years. Centuries later, the complexity and motives of participants coming together to collaborate on data exchange standards across Europe to overcome the barriers of acceptance of academic credentials centuries later was a much improved perspective. The conference room, like the Bologna Process, reveals that society recognizes the need to standardize in order to foster mobility and enhance trade.
The goals of the workshop were introduced by Simone Ravaiolli from Kion and Stephane Vely from unisolution, two software companies reflecting the emerging calls to collaborate and coordinate efforts on the development of student data exchange standards. Specifically the workshop was organized into four segments:

- Best practices presented as state level demonstration projects across Europe representing how systems are evolving to be compliant with the Bologna Process.
- Best practices presented as projects throughout the world that have revealed issues, opportunities and lessons learned.
- Discussion of using international standards for exchanging student data consequences for current projects and new opportunities.
- Discussion for steps toward an international standard for exchanging student data; requirements, constraints, approaches and dissemination

Conclusions and next steps were summarized at the end of the workshop leading toward a follow-on meeting to be arranged in Dublin Ireland early 2008. The group agreed in concept to encourage the European University Information System association, which represents more than 120 institutions across 22 European countries, to investigate a task force that would fall under their auspices.

As an American and someone who has worked long and hard on creating an awareness for the need to develop data exchange standards across the education eco-system, I entered the workshop inspired by a day spent visiting ancient sites and walking the narrow streets of Rome. Centuries ago, the Romans created specifications for chariots and aqueducts with precision. Their roads were designed to accommodate the chariots. So were the houses and doors which are still standing with door knockers eight feet high off the stone path. Aqueducts brought portable water to support health and life. Each invention was architected, refined and then deployed, giving the Roman Empire economies of scale and competitive advantages of lesser organized communities.

In Italy, higher education is a thousand years in the making. Europe is migrating to a federated model by market demand, what centuries of conquest and wars attempted to accomplish. This does imply I am comparing the call for data exchange standards to the discipline and force manifested through the centuries. Yet, there are similarities in the call for economic development requiring standardization. Granted, we are not working through aggressive power. Peaceful governments are negotiating goals, methods and desired outcomes to make their educational systems more competitive and global facing. Regions divided by borders and institutional legacy must overcome fears, trust and urges for control and domination. This obviously takes time.

My suggestion to the group was that the act of getting together with discourse will reveal the need to specialize efforts, create workgroups with the goals of study and isolation of practices. It will also create the need to construct a common dictionary, policies and procedures and governance to steer. In this effort, historical perspectives and prior
specifications and standards can be reviewed in practical terms, related to the present and future goals and requirements. If standards are found, they can be reviewed, adjusted and brought into view for the group to consider. I also suggested terminology separating the need of the group to potentially create specifications based upon requirements, which individual organizations can adopt and support, leading to standards. Standards evolve through adoption. Some come about by market penetration while others can be achieved by mandate.

Given the public investment in education and the political drivers, I was really moved by this voluntary effort convened in response to 46 governments trying to align goals, methods and outcomes. So, going forward, the evolution of data exchange standards in Europe will be a long term process of collaboration, comprise and determination to create a means to improve, streamline and employ operational practices voluntarily or by mandate that will serve institutional centric issues as well as student services. Sustainability will be dependent upon adoption and overcoming many barriers. Time will tell, if the goals set out by the workshop can eventually be achieved. I hope my effort and contributions were appreciated. Arrivederci – until we meet again.