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STATE COMPTROLLER



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STATE OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE STATE COMPTROLLER

November 21, 2001

Mr. Robert King  
Chancellor  
State University of New York  
State University Plaza  
Albany, New York 12246

Re: Report 2001-F-29

Dear Mr. King:

Pursuant to the State Comptroller's authority as set forth in Article V, Section 1 of the State Constitution and Article II, Section 8 of the State Finance Law, we have reviewed the actions taken by officials of the State University of New York (SUNY) as of October 31, 2001, to implement the recommendations contained in our audit *State University of New York, Utilization and Control of Selected Standardized Computer Systems* (Report 99-S-41). Our report, which was issued on August 7, 2000, reviewed SUNY's student information, finance and human resource systems to determine the extent that SUNY had standardized those computer systems, identify the benefits and improvement opportunities associated with the utilization of standardized systems and assess the adequacy of computer controls for the BANNER2000 Integrated Data Base System at selected colleges.

**Background**

SUNY operates 29 colleges and universities throughout New York State. SUNY System Administration provides overall leadership, oversight and support services to the college campuses, while a Board of Trustees sets SUNY policy. SUNY System Administration maintains the standardized university-wide system for the processing of finance and human resource transactions and information. The college campuses rely on a variety of computer application systems to meet their student information processing needs in the areas of student accounts, course registration, billing collections, grades and financial aid. The purchased student information systems that are in use include the BANNER2000 Integrated Data Base System (BANNER), Oracle applications and People Soft applications. Home grown campus systems are also used for student information processing needs.

## **Summary Conclusions**

In our prior audit, we found that SUNY had not established policy direction supporting the utilization of standardized systems for student information, finance and human resource processing throughout the University despite previous audit recommendations and various SUNY studies advocating such policy direction. We concluded that with appropriate leadership from System Administration and policy direction supported by the Board of Trustees, SUNY could make considerably more progress toward the utilization of standardized systems with resultant cost savings and efficiencies.

In our follow-up review, we found that SUNY System Administration has made progress in implementing our prior audit recommendations.

## **Summary of Status of Prior Audit Recommendations**

Of the four prior audit recommendations, SUNY System Administration has implemented three recommendations, and not implemented one recommendation.

## **Follow-up Observations**

### **Recommendation 1**

*Propose to the SUNY Board of Trustees policy directives promoting the utilization of standardized computer application systems throughout SUNY.*

Status - Not Implemented

Agency Action - SUNY System Administration officials advise that they continue to believe that policy directives and guidelines are administrative issues appropriately considered and dealt with by the Chancellor. Also, the officials believe that cost and operational considerations are local decisions that should be made by individual campuses. SUNY System Administration says that it continues to encourage campuses to collaborate on information technology initiatives and to standardize technology wherever possible and is actively working to increase software standardization across the University.

### **Recommendation 2**

*Work with SICAS to perform outreach to non-BANNER campuses in an effort to encourage these campuses to utilize BANNER.*

Status - Implemented

Agency Action - SUNY System Administration officials indicated that they are working with SICAS on a continuous basis to reach out to non-BANNER campuses and encourage them to join with other campuses using standardized software. Efforts have been particularly intense over the last six months. Outreach events include seminars, meetings and training sessions.

**Recommendation 3**

*Work with SICAS to improve communications among BANNER campuses and to encourage the campuses to actively participate in BANNER user groups.*

Status - Implemented

Agency Action - SUNY System Administration officials told us they are working with SICAS on an on-going basis to improve communications among BANNER campuses and to encourage the campuses to actively participate in BANNER user groups. SUNY's efforts include statewide conferences, workshops, presentations, training sessions and the revival of e-mail discussion lists designed to facilitate communication among BANNER users.

**Recommendation 4**

*As appropriate, advise BANNER campuses to take steps to correct the computer control weaknesses cited in this report.*

Status - Implemented

Agency Action - SUNY System Administration has advised the BANNER campuses to take steps to correct the computer control weaknesses cited in our audit report, and gave us a status report on each campus's progress in correcting each weakness cited.

Major contributors to this report were David Pleeter, Don Wilson and Karen Bogucki.

We would appreciate your response within 30 days indicating any actions planned or taken to address any unresolved matters discussed in this report. We also thank SUNY System Administration for the courtesies and cooperation extended to our staff during this review.

Very truly yours,

Jerry Barber  
Audit Director

cc: John Murphy  
Deirdre A. Taylor