UC SANTA BARBARA

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A Game-Changer

Culminating five years of effort — including more than 50,000 work hours by some 100 university employees — UC Santa Barbara's Graduate Division has launched the final portion of the campus's new joint Student Financial System (SFS).

A partnership of the Graduate Division, Student Information Systems and Technologies (SIS&T) and the Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships, with contributions from Enterprise Technology Services and other campus stakeholders, the project positively impacts graduate student financial operations for the division and more than 100 academic programs, organizational research units and other offices, including several units in Business and Financial Services.

Carol Genetti, the Anne and Michael Towbes Graduate Dean, called the system a "true game changer that improves [student-related] financial processing for both academic and administrative departments."

"We are thrilled with the final [product]," Genetti said. "Graduate student funding is both complex and dynamic. We took lots of time to map our business processes and ensure that the new design is up to the task [and] tested it extensively. There are still some bugs, which we are working to address. We look forward to continually enhancing the system over the years to come. I have great respect for SIS&T, their technical expertise, their people skills, and their deep experience with project design and implementation."

The new joint system ensures more compliant disbursement to students of hundreds of millions of dollars in federal, state and institutional grants, fellowships, fee-remission, scholarships and loans. By implementing SFS, the campus now retires six Graduate Division legacy applications, two Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships legacy applications and the older GSFR system. Several manual paper processes have been digitized, or eliminated altogether.

“This new system brings to campus a more secure and compliant process for the awarding and disbursement of aid to all students, both graduate and undergraduate,” said project manager Brian L. Frazier of SIS&T. “It consolidates eight-plus different applications into one unified system that includes an improved MyAidStatus web portal for students and a brand new Graduate Division financial web portal for campus staff and faculty to use in the awarding, management and viewing of graduate student aid, including employment fee remission information and other related, administrative functions.”

According to Frazier, the new system also consolidates award information related to all student aid in a single location, allowing the Graduate Division’s financial unit to better assist departments with questions or concerns related to graduate student aid. Among its benefits to the campus more broadly, SFS provides near real-time information about student aid — from type to amount to means of disbursement — to students, staff and faculty alike. In that sense, Frazier said, it provides peace of mind to students worried about their aid status and key information to departments as they weigh decisions about graduate student aid, consider waivers and manage funds.

“This new system allows for the Graduate Division and the Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships to be even better stewards in the use of public funds than they already are,” Frazier concluded. “This is not only good for UCSB's students and the campus and community at large, but it also is a benefit to the people of California, whose tax money helps to support the mission of our university and the whole UC system.”

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community

of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.