**Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies Admissions System**

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| Project Governance and Management |
| Executive Sponsor | Seiichi Matsuda, Klara Jelinkova, Peter Rossky |
| Project Manager | Kathleen Meyers (Misha Bruno) |
| Business Owner | Kate Cross |
| Service Manager | Bob Truscott |
| Version Number | 2.0 |

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| Project Scope |
| Background/Issue |
| The existing, custom-developed application for receiving and processing graduate student admission applications is beyond end of life, running on an unsupported version of the underlying technology framework. The application is highly customized for each department and reporting on core metrics is not available. Upgrading to a supported version of the framework would break the application and require redevelopment. There are modern applications specifically developed for graduateadmissions that are available and used by our peers. |
| Project Impact/Benefits |
| Some universities use the same commercial, cloud based software for processing both undergraduate and graduate admissions. Modern systems provide flexibility in workflow and vendor support.Metrics assure assessment of admissions processes is possible across departments. |
| Project Goals |
| A major goal is to deliver a stable, supported, modern admissions system for the graduate programsat Rice. An equally important goal is that the delivery and transition for the departments is smooth. |
| Stakeholders |
| Faculty and Dept. Administrators involved in graduate admissions, Dean of Graduate Postdoctoral Studies, Asst. Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, Graduate Studies applicants, Registrar,Financial Aid Director |

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| Project Approach |
| The project approach involves the following major segments:1. Requirements definition, product comparison, selection, and licensing.
2. System Build - involves working with a set of volunteer pilot departments in iterative fashion to configure and test the system for their requirements and workflows.
3. Pilot department to go live.
4. Configuration and adoption for remaining departments and programs. (Scheduled over one or two remaining academic cycles.
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| Scope |
| * In Scope: Graduate student admissions processes for all academic departments. May include some not currently using the legacy system.
* Out of Scope: Post decision information archival, data warehouse integration
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| Objectives/Deliverables |
| Deliverables are:* Requirements document
* Comparative information for leading systems
* Licensed software or subscription
* Configured system
* Training materials
* Operations documentation
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| Risks & Dependencies |
| * Unknown and/or unusual workflows or local procedures that have been developed around the current system that are not accommodated in the configuration or handled through change management and procedural modification.
* Loss of key staff
* Vendor risk. Software fails to work per documentation.
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| Resource Requirements |
| Dedicated Project Staff:* Project Manager
* Business Analyst
* Assistant Dean for Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
* Trainer
* Systems Analyst/Developer

Additional FTE on BOT approved initiatives: 1 FTE for training, 1 Business AnalystFaculty (Business) Advisory Committee:Susan Cates (staff BCB)Behnaam Aazhang (ECE)Sayuri Shimizu (HIST)Fred Higgs (MECH)Adria Baker (OISS, no department)Gwen Bradford (PHIL)Randy Hulet (PHYS)Ashley Leeds (POLI)Other departments involved:Departmental Graduate Admissions Office of the RegistrarCashier’s OfficeUndergraduate Admissions, Jones School (both have Slate Contract)Financial AidDollars: Depends on System selection;* Slate is $75,000 per year based on the number of applicants
* Banner
* CollegeNet
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| High Level Milestones & Deliverables |
| Faculty Selection/Steering Committee Kickoff | TBD |
| Requirements definition | June 2017 |
| Comparison document for alternative systems | July 2017 |
| System selected | September 2017 |
| License/Subscription Agreement executed | October 2017 |
| Self-selected, volunteer pilot departments confirmed and committed | October 2017 |
| Begin Iterative system configuration process with pilot departments | November 2017 |
| End initial system configuration (pilot departments) | August 2018 |
| Begin Fall 2018 admissions cycle for Fall 2019 matriculation (pilot depts.) | September 2018 |



Note: Dates and milestones are subject to change pending final requirements and resource availabil

**Rice’s Graduate Application Platform: Current and Future**

**V2.0 (Comments from Dean’s Council have been integrated)**

The current platform for all graduate admissions supported by GPS is reaching its end of life. This homegrown system, GradAdmit, was built in 2008 using Cold Fusion 8 and has been GPS’ admission tool since 2011. Adobe has since announced plans to end support of Cold Fusion. Therefore, GradAdmit will become increasingly problematic to maintain and improve. Ultimately, it will become a security risk. We must adopt a new tool to manage graduate student applications.

We have the opportunity to select a new admissions system that would be more effective and efficient than the current system. We also have the opportunity for Rice to identify tools that would allow us to develop and maintain connections with prospective students and their prospective recommenders before they apply, collaborate across campus in our recruitment of graduate students, and to identify and reflect on our successes and failures in this effort. The requirements listed below are technology needs that would enable graduate programs’ faculty and staff with the means to engage early in the recruitment of top prospective students, to be strategic in their admissions decisions, and more competitive in building strong cohorts of graduate students.

**Requirements for a Future Graduate Application Platform**

Secure. A new application system must meet Rice University’s IT Security Standards and have a plan and resources to support ongoing compliance. The system should have continual monitoring of user access and an internal notification / control system if a potential security problem arises.

Evolving. A new application system must meet technological expectations of both applicants and internal users. The system must have the capacity to change as business processes evolve without re-tooling the entire system. The application should be written to allow administrative users the ability to adapt components internally and utilize vendor support for major changes. As the web evolves, this application needs to be poised to easily adapt to these expectations both technically and cosmetically.

Compatible. A new application system must be compatible with all popular Internet browsers and mobile devices. Any widgets or plug-ins used in the application must be acceptable (or adaptable) if encountered behind firewalls.

Unified and Customizable. The underlying database beneath the application system must support all of the graduate programs currently served by GradAdmit well as any new graduate programs to be offered in the future. The application system itself must be able to support program and school based customization of the application, including the ability to manage audiofiles and portfolios. The amount of customization implemented, however, must be technically sustainable by the offices that administer the maintenance of the application.

Intuitive Interface. Applicants must find the application itself intuitive. Faculty and staff tools must require minimal training and practice and provide adequate workflow tools so that the applications can be managed within the application. The application system must guide new faculty and staff through the admissions process, informing them of university policies and opportunities (bonuses, incentives, external fellowships) as relevant.

Flexible Review and Informed Selection. Faculty rankings and comments must be able to be managed within the application database so that the all data points can be accessed to make admissions decisions.

Effective Customer Relationship Management. The application system must log all touchpoints with an applicant, beginning with first contact. Interest forms and Rice events for prospective applicants and applicants must be an extension of the application. Contact lists gathered through other channels must be easily stored and accessed from within the application system. The system should archive all communications with applicant and facilitate the automation of mass communications to potential applicants, applicants, admits, accepts, and non-accepts. The portal should allow for communication on missing information as well as matriculation responsibilities and opportunities, trainings, and opportunities for the student and be customizable to the individual applicant. An ideal system would have a tool to manage and facilitate interactions between special groups (student/alumni recruiters for instance) and a prospective student.

Integrated Data. The application system must contain tools for communication between Rice’s graduate programs and internal offices. This would include tools within the system to request special consideration of an applicant (admissions exceptions petitions, external funding review, bonus and incentive requests), plan recruiting events (RSVPs, et. al.), collect admissions decisions, and conduct post-decision surveys. This may also include automatic or semi-automatic integration with housing and visa applications, Banner, OnBase, and the data warehouse. Integration with external vendors such as ETS for test scores from systems such as Interfolio for letters of reference would be highly desired. An ideal system would have optical imaging native to the software so that images of submitted documents could be attached and reviewed on each applicant.

Integrated Reporting. Internal dashboards and reporting tools for common data requests. Ability to build internal custom reports by the graduate programs, schools, and Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Ability to generate published reports related to applicant, admit, and matriculate and non-matriculate demographics, admit rates, yield and other measures of graduate program competitiveness. The application must have the capacity to create reports that can be run at scheduled times and delivered automatically to a group list or individual.

Workflow tools and automation. Graduate program admissions committee chairs and staff have expressed an interest in workflow tools such as: optional email notifications when applications are received, utility to communicate among individuals within the graduate program within the application itself, semi- and fully- automated reminders of deadlines for applicants, customization of the application view for internal viewers, ability to search the data set for various characteristics (GPA range, GRE scores, place of origin), allow for individual reviewers to mark/tag applicants as favorites, customized scoring system within the graduate program, and ability to run missing requirements report. Furthermore Applications systems should be able to talk to one another: Music currently uses three systems to manage their applications – Slate for undergraduate admissions, GradAdmit for graduate admissions, and Acceptd so that their faculty members can access all their pre-screening needs through a single portal. Moving away from this disjointed model would be desirable.

Financially Responsible. There must be a viable financial plan to support the adoption and ongoing maintenance of the application system.