

Publishing and Access to Institutional and Academic Information

Institutions publish academic calendar, program, fees and course offerings across a variety of mediums, databases and formats. Academic information is often spread across many electronic databases on campus and duplicated outside by third parties including the Student System, Course Management System, Degree Audit System, Scheduling System, Bookstore System, Faculty Development System, Transfer Articulation System and Course Development System. These systems are generally separate and duplicate academic data gathered from authoritative sources either manually or in digital form. Synchronization adds costs and complexity. Websites and College or University Catalogs also collect and list course offerings by catalog year or session duplicating elements sourced from departments and colleges. Transfer agreements between institutions often list courses compared and accepted between two or more institutions. State agencies and consortia also collect and publish course offerings by discipline, method of instruction and location.

Electronic publishing of academic information in a standard form would allow for access across the institution's core applications managing such data and external applications desiring to gain access to the academic data to facilitate search, calculations, comparability, assessment and guidance. It would allow for variation and customization. It would enable applications to call on-demand services rather than store and synchronize academic information. It would reduce the cost of redundancy and miss-information caused by time and error. Imagine every institution publishing a standard set of academic information services as a series of authoritative web services abstracting the differences of source, method of management and access method. Tools could be improved, storage requirements reduced, network load reduced, and the complexity of distributed data that often changes, can be reduced.

States and collaborative efforts often aggregate centralized views of courses offered or archived by institutions, to allow faculty, students and advisors to access courses for comparability, assessment and articulation. Institutions often re-enter course information duplicating what could be accessed by other institutions (present and past) through their transfer articulation process. Having a course inventory lookup for instance, with current and prior courses by institution, department, faculty or student level would reduce re-entry, reduce errors, improve self-service and enable new tools to be developed that can bridge the curriculum of institutions.