



 **Summit**  
Honolulu, Hawaii **2005**

March 9, 2005

# Campus-Wide Reporting Tool Selection

Presented by: Brett Powell, University of Arkansas at Little Rock

March 9, 2005 10:30 – 11:30  
Evaluation Code 129

UNIFYING THE  
EXPERIENCE

# Session Rules of Etiquette

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- Please turn off your cell phone/pager
- If you must leave the session early, please do so as discreetly as possible
- Please avoid side conversation during the session

Thank you for your cooperation!

# Introduction

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- Purpose of this session
  - Discuss the selection process for a campus-wide reporting tool at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock
  - Purpose is NOT to advise other campuses on which solution is best for them – each situation is different
- Benefits of attending this session
  - Learn about the selection process used at UALR
  - Information about certain products/vendors that may be helpful in your decision-making

# Topics of Discussion

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- Background of our situation
- Process at UALR
- Review of potential solutions
- Current status of the project

# UALR Situation

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- Campus of approximately 12,000 students
- Operating budget of \$108 MM
- Banner site since 1999
- Current reporting options
  - Microsoft Access
  - Crystal Reports
  - SQL
  - MIS/Institutional Research request

# Our Goal

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Provide readily available pre-designed reports that meet 80-90% of data needs

and

Flexible, user-friendly ad-hoc reporting tool to meet the remaining reporting needs

# UALR Review Process

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- Why do we need a reporting tool?
- Which users would benefit from a reporting tool?
- What requirements must be met?
- Which products might fit our needs?

# Why do we need a reporting tool?

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- Timeliness of information
- Reliability of information
- Ability to access data
- Security of data

# Which users will benefit?

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- Administrative areas
  - MS Access or Crystal Reports works for many of these users, however...
    - Creating databases for new users
    - Granting security to tables
  - Improved security and reliability

# Which users will benefit?

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- Academic/Other areas
  - Faculty – course related data, advisee data
  - Chairs/Directors – department or program data
  - Department/grant financial managers – finance data
  - Institutional Research – campus-wide data, both high-level and detail
- These users are primarily who this project was intended to benefit
- Tried to approach the project from their perspective

# What requirements must be met?

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- Web-based query and reporting
- Customizable views
- Data security that can be synchronized with Oracle and Banner
- Scalability for future growth
- Ease of use for end-users
- Data integrity to ensure that multiple users receive identical results

# What requirements must be met?

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- Ability to query and report on Banner databases as well as external databases
- Utilization of API technology for portal integration
- Job scheduling
- Compatibility with Banner database structure (reduce necessity of re-designing reports when the database changes)

# Identified Barriers

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- Access to data  
(proper Oracle/Banner security)
- Cost – implementation, support, training, maintenance
- Campus resistance
- Technical aptitude of users
- Time for training and use (less time = greater acceptance)
- Time for implementation

# Which products might meet our needs?

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- Identified 6 possible solutions
  - Business Objects BI/Crystal Reports
  - Cognos BI
  - Evisions Argos
  - Hummingbird BI
  - Information Builders WebFOCUS
  - Oracle Discoverer
- Request for information sent to each
  - Responses from vendors on how their products meet the requirements we outlined

# Evaluation of potential solutions

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- Review of vendor responses by committee
- Arrange product demonstrations
- Evaluation results from demo attendees and from committee
- Summary of pros/cons for each vendor
- Recommendation from the committee

# Product Demonstrations

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- Invited each vendor who responded to campus
- Demos were to have two purposes
  - Show end users what they can expect
  - Show the committee how our requirements would be met
- Asked end users to identify specific reports they wanted to see demonstrated
- Tried to get at least 10 end users to commit to all demonstrations

# End User Evaluation Questions

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1. How would you rate the ease of creating a report using the product?
2. Do the possible report formats (Excel, HTML, text, etc.) meet your needs?
3. Was the report information presented in terms you understand?
4. Based on the demo, did the reporting interface seem easy to navigate?
5. How would you rate the ease of calculating new information from the data given?
6. What was the best feature of this product?
7. What was the worst feature of this product?

# End User Evaluation Results

## Question

Vendor	1		2		3		4		5	
	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank
Cognos	3.08	2	3.54	2	3.15	3	3.31	1	3.17	3
Evisions	3.44	1	3.67	1	3.60	1	3.20	3	3.33	1
Hummingbird	3.00	3	3.43	3	3.43	2	3.29	2	3.29	2
Info. Builders	2.91	4	3.36	4	2.55	4	2.82	4	2.8	4

# End User Evaluation Results - Cognos

## Best Feature:

Web-based  
Intuitive for those who already work with databases  
Empower end users with reporting tools  
Reduce time spent creating reports  
Seems user-friendly  
Drill-down  
Scheduler  
Report on multiple funds on one page  
End user training in 1/2 day  
Easy point and click report build  
Ease of use  
Attractiveness of reports  
Flexibility

## Worst Feature:

Cost  
Time to develop metadata  
Complex setup  
Long installation  
May have a hard time getting their attention once the sale is made  
Concerns about accessibility

# End User Evaluation Results - Evisions

## Best Feature:

Customer service  
Data blocks  
Security  
You don't have to know SQL  
Fully secure  
Inter-institutional sharing of reports  
Web-based training  
Ability to test-drive the product  
Ease of writing reports  
Access to other Banner institutions

## Worst Feature:

Not well tested/used yet  
Looks like end users still have their data limited  
to cooperation of Computing Services  
Accessibility  
Training

# End User Evaluation Results - Hummingbird

## Best Feature:

Web interface

Ability to transfer queries to Excel or Access

Highly adaptable by users (creating queries)

Charting options

Warning if tables chosen could give erroneous results

Report formatting seems easier

## Worst Feature:

Accessibility

Changes will override original set up for a user

Automatic upgrades do not contain patches

Users have to be experts to create reports

# End User Evaluation Results – Information Builders

## Best Feature:

Web-based

Configurable

No client installation

Unlimited end user license

Simple

Customization for individual users

Easy merge to graphs/tables

Pre-defined, out of the box setup

Can run on same server or ODS

Appears to have a friendlier user interface than Cognos

## Worst Feature:

Reliance on data warehouse

Ad hoc is limited, complicated

1-2 major upgrades per year, several minor releases

Being put into a security class that may not have all my needs

Difficult report creation

Lack of real metadata

Seemed less user-friendly than Cognos

# Pros/Cons - Cognos

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## *Pros*

Security - Oracle, Banner, down to the cell level on cubes

Reports private or public

Email distribution

Automatically burst and distribute a report

Impact analysis - if database changes, notifies you of the reports impacted

Simple enough for a basic report

Run on either test or production server

OLAP

## *Cons*

Several products needed to get all of the features

Too many features for most users

# Pros/Cons - Evisions

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## ***Pros***

Data is encrypted from the server  
Security - Oracle/Banner, additional layer at field or record level  
Web based user training - short sessions  
Report/Object sharing with other Argos sites  
Familiar user interface (similar to Access)  
Quick views to reports (click to run)  
SCT relationship - pre-release testing  
Customer service  
Has the features we need without the extra bells and whistles  
Debugging feature - creates logs of errors, can send to  
Evisions  
Can build Oracle stored procedures  
Unlimited users, servers and connections (currently)

## ***Cons***

Scheduling/Distribution not available yet  
Very immature product  
Does encryption impact performance (slower)?

# Pros/Cons - Hummingbird

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## *Pros*

Statistics on how often data is used

Distribution options - email, ftp, publish

Refresh data objects - looks for changes in the database

Scheduling tool

## *Cons*

Some of the reporting features require desktop install

Only support NT platform

Separate server required for a test instance

No XML

Each client install must be upgraded

# Pros/Cons – Information Builders

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## *Pros*

Product (add-on) with APIs for Luminis, Oracle portal, U-Portal

Long-time SCT partner

Multiple formats for output

Run against flat files

Security - building in VBS, form-based

## *Cons*

Complicated user interface

Ad-hoc reporting was cumbersome

# Current Status

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- Committee recommended Evisions' Argos product
- Other Argos users have been contacted for their comments
- Purchase decision was made in mid-February
- Roll-out planning to begin in March

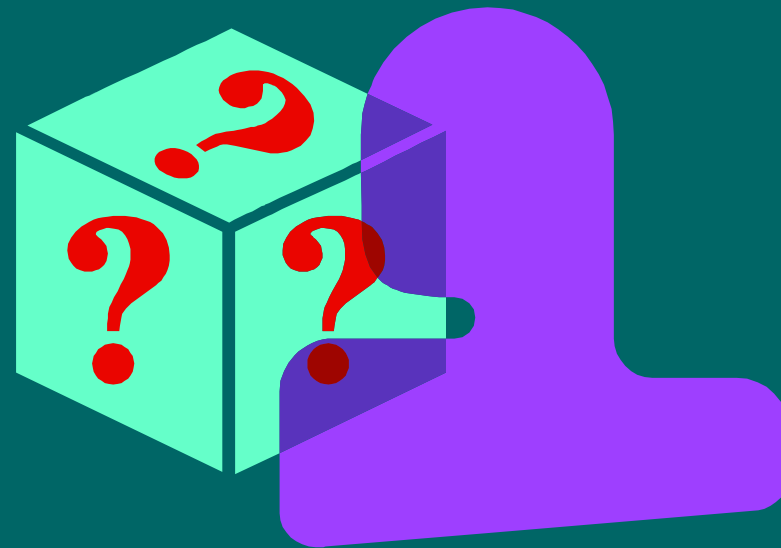
# Summary

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- Important steps in the process for UALR were:
  - Make sure end users know what to expect
  - On site demonstrations were very valuable
  - Vendors need to demonstrate the products in terms end users understand
  - Involvement in the evaluation should include all areas of campus

# Questions & Answers

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# Thank You!

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Please complete the on-line Evaluation Form

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