

July 19, 1993

MEMORANDUM

To: Robert Zimmerman
From: W. David Wimberly
Subject: BASIS response to the System Audit of C.S.

The audit report seems to make the assumption that the BASIS project is strictly a Computing Services project and solely within its control. Though Computing Services is playing a major role and providing a majority of the resources for BASIS, it is in fact a joint project with effort and responsibility shared by Business Affairs, Financial Affairs, Human Resources, the Vice Chancellor of Finance and Administration, and Computing Services. The BASIS project is directed by the BASIS Steering Committee, the only formal decision making body associated with the project. Computing Services exercises very limited control over the project, relying on the central administrative office personnel to define the system requirements (via an interview and prototype approach), test the systems, develop user and training documentation, train the users (department representatives across the campus), and direct the campus wide implementation of the systems.

The University has never attempted an automation project of the scope of BASIS. The systems entail much more than just new applications for the central offices because the design and project objective are for distributed access, distributed data entry, and electronic approval of transactions. Once implemented, the applications will directly affect the entire University community. Due to the size of the project, the new application concepts being pursued, and the lack of any related experience; the initial estimates and target dates for the project can best be described as *guesstimates*. Other factors that have made it difficult to define a schedule for the BASIS project include:

- The system requirements are only loosely defined and are, in fact, in a continuous state of change. Further, there is disagreement amongst the team regarding what is acceptable for an initial product. This is the typical problem of creeping requirements, where pursuit of the ideal system prevents any system from being implemented.
- Personnel changes (which generally cannot be controlled) have a dramatic impact on the very small project team.
- Support staff from the central administrative offices are assigned project responsibilities on top of their normal full time workload. The BASIS project continues to be the last priority whenever there is a crunch, which is almost constantly. For example, users have had to schedule meetings just to force themselves to set aside time to test the systems.
- To support development of the BASIS applications, our system infrastructure was significantly enhanced and new development tools developed. These *investments* were considered essential and have addressed items such as TARGET, "desk" based security, program generation facilities, and significant enhancements to the existing NSM architecture.

The current system development approach is to design, develop, and deliver individual modules of the system for independent implementation. Schedules and target dates have been established for the initial modules of BASIS I (Leave Accounting) and BASIS II (General Journal Interface Module). The implementation of these modules will provide much of the needed background and experience for preparing future estimates and schedules. One area where this was made vividly apparent was the creation of the new project Training Coordinator. The approaching implementation of these initial modules confronted the central offices with the realities associated with the preparation of user documentation and training materials and the task of training all campus offices (responsibilities to which they had previously committed). When faced with fulfilling this responsibility, justification was prepared and presented for the creation of a Training Coordinator position to help out, if not totally assume, these responsibilities. This is just one example where our lack of realization of what we have under-taken has been demonstrated. Any other similar areas should be revealed with the actual implementation of the initial BASIS modules.

Computing Services is certainly as eager as anyone to see all BASIS applications implemented and the plug pulled on the old MSA systems. It would appear though that this may be a long slow process. We would like to see the BASIS Steering Committee and the University management become actively involved in the project. Meaningful short term objectives should be established and frequent project reviews employed, including the demonstration of satisfactory progress. There is an overwhelming need for direction regarding the functionality of the systems, whether we need to focus on getting basic systems in place as soon as possible or enhance the systems so that everyone is happy with them before they are implemented. Further, clear priorities should be defined for the central office staff. It is not fair to ask them to perform two jobs, either additional resources need to be brought in or we must realize that BASIS will be worked on only when time is available. Trying to define what we may be able to accomplish in a two or three year period is not practical, but management can focus on the next two or three months and take an active role in ensuring that reasonable progress is achieved. It is not just a matter of Computing Services "complying" with a schedule, successful implementation of BASIS will require much more than that from everyone.