



Maintaining a sustainable Future for IT in Higher Education

Thursday 16th June 2011

Time: 15:30 - 16:15

EDU ONE: Can be the University Information System For Free?

IS4U Company was founded in 2010 by all members of Mendel University's University Information System development team as a result of transition from academic world to real business. Today we have licensed all results of our decades of work from that university and further develop those products. These days, we have implemented our solutions at five different Czech and Slovak universities, and we are working on another two implementations hand in hand with other business cases in content management, eCommerce and billing area. Our biggest customers among universities are AVG Technologies, Liwet Ltd and Brno City Police.

We have been developing information system for universities for more than 11 years; therefore, we are all-too familiar with their budget problems. For this reason, we have launched a new initiative called "Give an information system to universities for free". How is that possible? And who will pay the development costs? Can any university use this information system?

Our company has started the development of universal, high-configurable and flexible study information system based on ECTS rule set last year and uses our experience from seven different public and private universities. Main principles used for design of new information system is great user experience together with flexible and adapt core functions which allows to operate different rules and conditions for different groups of students (per faculties, departments, study programs or individuals).

The whole system is developed in Microsoft .NET environment using C# language, our internal ORM framework called KULEF (entity mapping framework which allows to use different database systems like Oracle or MS SQL Server on the one side and maximum flexibility for building distributable client/server system on the other side) and the latest technologies for presentation layer – WPF for thick client (study administrative, supervisors) and combination of MVC ASP.NET and Silverlight WPF for thin client (web browser – students, teachers).

Solution covers all functionalities common for our previous solution – University information system (derived from Mendel University original system). These functionalities include among others admission control, students' enrollment, timetables, examinations, final thesis arrangement, state exams, official documents and alumni club. We are trying to cover the whole student life cycle and support students, teachers and student administrative the most current data of all aspects bound with this life cycle. We emphasize the individual approach of every student or teacher and deliver care of those records to their originators.

But what is the most interesting in this system is the business model which we choose for distribution. We know that the budget is shorter year by year and the most of universities need to spend funds in salaries, educational materials, buildings, hardware, communication equipment or primary services. For those the level of acquisition, maintaining and other costs are important and in their effort to save funds often select inappropriate information system, simple solutions or not-so-complex agendas.

We want to allow those universities to use our solution which we believe is complex and appropriate. And we want to allow using it for free as a standard solution for their operation. This would be possible by transferring the development and operational costs to different group – to students. Our company wants to offer to all users the basic functionality and all standard functions. But together with standard solution we will provide also premium services and rich application client or web access for those students who paid for those premium services.

Those services include some advanced tools like direct access to information by mobile devices, monitoring free space on exams, batch operations during timetable preparations, premium offers of books and services from 3rd parties and a lot of others.

Every university who enter to our development partner program will be allowed to use this information system after it will be finished and during the development phase can influence the way how individual study functions are designed, implemented and interpreted by development team. We prepared an unique set of benefits for partners which includes creating a wish list, construction of our development plan, voting on priorities and influencing the analysis during the face-to-face workshops.

If you want to know more about our solution, prepared development partner program and our current experience with this model of development, please come to our exhibition stand located in venue of the EUNIS congress, discuss with our colleagues or come to hear for yourself our oral presentation in commercial presentations' session of this conference.

We are looking forward to discuss with you and to exchange contacts between your university and our company for future information about the project and development status.

You may also visit our web presentation at www.is4u.eu.