

Kuali Days Conference (Nov 14-16, 2011), Indianapolis, IN

Trip Report

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Definitions:

KFS = Kuali Financial System

KC = Kuali-Coeus (Version 5.0 – Spring 2012 release)

KC-Proposal Development

KC-Institutional Record

KC-Awards

KC-IRB

KC-IACUC

KC-COI

KC-Subawards

KC-Negotiations

KPME = Kuali People Management for the Enterprise [“HR”]

KSCM = Kuali Student Curriculum Management

K-RICE = “Switchboard” module used to communicate among other Kuali modules

Coeus = Original non-web-based system developed by MIT; now has a web interface

Coeus Lite = Web-based “subset” of Coeus functions designed to make using Coeus easier

Some observations based on information obtained at the conference...

(1) The Good News

After obtaining a ton of additional details at the Conference regarding individual Kuali modules, I can comfortably reaffirm that our assessment of Kuali is basically correct regarding the current eRA needs of the University of Iowa: With a couple of exceptions (Compliance modules) what we are using now is as good as, or better than, what Kuali can offer in the next couple of years at least. The KC-Proposal Development counterpart at the UI (i.e., Cayuse) is unquestionably better from the point of view of the PI (proposal development) and that of Sponsored Programs (proposal review and submission). Speaking of “Best Practices,” Cayuse is unquestionably that, and we are using it now. The next release of KC (Version 5.0 in Spring 2012) does include some improvements in Proposal Development but will still be a step backwards if we were to adopt KC 5.0 and drop Cayuse.

(2) The Even Better News

What's even better is that Kuali is being constantly improved by top eRA administrators and specialized programmers from some of the best research institutions in the country. The Kuali community is growing, with more and more "consortium" partners banding together to improve module features, and to make it easier for individual institutions to implement and modify.

(3) Bottom Line

The conclusion is that we do not need to move to Kuali immediately and, even if that decision is 100% wrong, Kuali will only be BETTER (and cheaper to implement) a couple of years from now, especially after KC Version 5.0 (released in the Spring, 2012) is released and tested by others.

(4) Kuali Conference : Mostly for "The Faithful" who have already picked Coeus.

Most Kuali sessions were geared toward those who were implementing, or would be soon implementing, Kuali modules. Very much a "How to" atmosphere for teckies, and not much room for the "Should we pick Kuali?" temperament.

(5) Vendors Fully Hosting Kuali Modules? – A Future Trend?

If the cost of hardware and data storage continues to decline, and the speed of the internet continues to increase by orders of magnitude, we should see fully hosted Kuali modules by remote vendors in the next few years.. Programming adjustments could be done much more efficiently by vendors specializing in Kuali software. Vendors might offer an "out of the box" price, plus additional optional costs for software changes. Remote hosting would eliminate the need for local infrastructure and IT support, and greatly facilitate disaster recovery.

(6) What is COEUS and how does it differ from KC?

Coeus was originally a non-web based "client/server" application for "cradle to grave" grant administration (development, routing, review, submission, and post-award) that required users to download a special application to use it. Coeus (and Coeus Lite) can now be accessed via a web browser. Coeus contains more functionality than early releases of KC, but the next version of KC (Version 5.0, released on Spring 2012) will

supposedly “catch up” to Coeus functionality. [\[Brief Coeus History.\]](#) (KC 5.0 will not, however, catch up to Cayuse in terms of Proposal Preparation functionality.) So KC Version 5.0 will do everything Coeus could do, with some added functionality and other improvements.

(7) Why are Current Coeus/KC Institutions not rushing to implement KC?

Current Coeus institutions (most of which also use Coeus Lite – a web-based application that makes Coeus easier to use) currently enjoy greater functionality with Coeus than with the current version of KC. When KC Version 5.0 (due for release in Spring, 2011) supposedly catches up with Coeus in functionality, the reason for these institutions to switch to KC 5.0 will be mainly to take advantage of new KC features, and make it easier to adopt other KC modules as they are released (via the KC-Rice “switchboard” interface). It will require a change in “infrastructure” to change from Coeus to KC but the current Coeus users would mainly see a “slightly improved” version of what they are using now for proposal development. So, overall, there is not a huge impetus for current Coeus users to rapidly adopt KC 5.0.

(8) What’s the usual order of KC implementation, and why?

In terms of functionality, here is the flow of information in KC:

KC(PropDev) → KC(Inst Prop) → KC(Award) → KFS

Proposals are first developed, routed, reviewed, and submitted, in KC(PropDev) and then passed to KC(Inst Prop) after submission (to add, roughly, what we call “pink sheet” data at the UI), and then to KC(Award) for budget preparation, before handing off to KFS. [KFS = UI GAO + UI UIRIS core data]

When it comes to the INSTALLATION of KC, however, most institutions prefer to install in the following order:

1. KFS
2. KC(Institutional Proposal)
3. KC(Award)

with the following functionality:

KC(Inst Prop) → KC(Award) → KFS

and then the final piece is put in place:

4. KC(Proposal Development)

In other words, they set up the financial module (KFS) first, and then set up the two modules (KC-Inst. Prop.; KC-Award) that directly “feed” KFS via their budget components. KC-PropDev is released to the campus last, with initial testing in the sponsored programs office.

(9) USC - \$12M to implement KC(Inst Prop) → KC(Award) → KC(PropDev)

The University of Southern California (USC) is spending \$12 (twelve) Million to install and implement the KC modules. Their previous proposal preparation module used CLICK COMMERCE. USC was not happy with Click Commerce, and is discontinuing it for proposal preparation.

(10) “Other” Kualo modules (Other than KFS or KC)

I focused all of my attention at the Kualo Conference on KFS and KC issues, but Kualo also has other modules under development in the areas of:

- A. “Human Resources) (KPME),
- B. “Library Management” (K-OLE),
- C. “personal information management” (KIM), and
- D. “student curriculum”
- E. “managing Kualo modules + Routing” (K-Rice)

(11) Jennifer Lassner’s Requested Information Regarding ATTACHMENTS

JENNIFER’S COMMENT

“If you have the chance, please ask others who currently have or are planning to implement eRouting about attachments – what is required, who reviews and how it is handled once it gets to the central office. “

GRANTS.GOV ATTACHMENTS

A few of the sessions touched on how current COEUS (non-web system) institutions handle Grants.gov PDF attachments: Once a PDF is attached (e.g., Project Description) it can be “re-attached” at any point in the routing process or even after “DEAN” approval. The PDF is just a “place holder” for a continuously evolving Project Description.

This (working on the “science” until the very end) is what most PIs think they want to do, without working through the consequences of the “last second upload” being a routing part of the submission process.

One speaker said that sponsored programs “doesn’t review the content of the Project Description PDF anyway” but, of course we do, and I had to point that out. We rarely comment on the science (although I have a couple of stories in that regard) but we definitely examine the CONTENT of the Project Description PDF for:

- (1) The correct PDF file being uploaded: We’ve all caught PI’s making corrections on PDF#2, but then uploaded PDF#1 by an oversight.
- (2) The PDF content not having the major heading divisions required by the agency;
- (3) The PDF heading not containing a certain code or number, as required by the FOA;
- (4) The PDF having text or figures that are grossly misconfigured, running off the edge, etc.

So, sponsored programs does need to examine the CONTENT of the PDF for issues other than the science, and this cannot be done with a few minutes (or seconds) left on the submission “shot clock.”

ATTACHMENTS IN GENERAL

You can “clamp” Coeus (or KC) to not permit switching or adding attachments once the routing has begun, or ended. Or you can configure it (as many have now apparently) to PERMIT updating PDFs during and after routing. This doesn’t solve the problem of what’s best to do, regarding attachments, but COEUS can reflect your business rules (once you have figured them out yourself).

I understand that Dave (Myers in UI DSP) is also talking about late attachments that miss the whole routing process, but are sent “ad hoc” to Dave for him to catch up “by hand” with the Yellow Sheet. You could prohibit such ad hoc attachments coming in, but our UI Routing Form is itself increasingly a “place holder” for stuff and proposals that are still to be finalized. Is this a “**bug**” (lots of pieces floating around) or a “**feature**” (flexibility!)?

I think we’ve found that, with grant submissions, “drop dead” rules don’t last long, whether it’s “**internal UI deadlines**” or “**don’t give us attachments after routing,**” or “**list all participants for COI,**” etc., we always:

- (1) Do the best we can, and
- (2) Cave in!

to get the grant out on time.

(12) “Best Practices” vs. “Make the Best of It”

The downside of the tight “integration” that you see in Kualu is that, once you adopt one Kualu module (for example, KFS) you are “forced” to use other Kualu modules that interact with it, or submit massive reprogramming requests. If there is a “best practice” out there (for example, Cayuse) you can’t take advantage of it, and have to “make the best of” using KC.

(13) KUALI: "Made by Administrators for Administrators."

...thus ensuring we will always need a lot of research administrators??

Kuali's "Questionnaire-Driven" approach makes lots of extra work when you are completing a form during proposal preparation. In the following example, you can either:

- A. Put a number in a box, on the form (Form-Driven Approach); or
- B. Read all of the corresponding instructions in Kuali Coeus to do the same thing (Questionnaire-Driven Approach).

"Forms-Driven" Approach (e.g., Cayuse) Just fill out the "Year 1" box directly on the form.

VS.

"Questionnaire-Driven" Approach (e.g., KUALI) Read and understand all of this stuff...

1. * Tuition and Fees: If you are not requesting any tuition or fees in the detailed budget, "None Requested" will be selected. If you do have added Tuition in detailed budget "Funds Requested" will be selected and detail will map for each applicable year of support, in the fields provided.	Budget: Cost Element: 422311 Description: Tuition-Other- Not MTDC Line Item expense entered per budget period in the Cost Element defined for Tuition for this form.	To populate this form the tuition must be budgeted using the parameterized cost element in Tuition_Cost_Elements. If Tuition is not budgeted, the "None Requested" box will be checked. Parameter: Tuition_Cost_Elements To maintain parameter: enter cost element in the method: ('XXXXXX') e.g. parenthetical statement, single quote at the end of CE. Example: Warning: If Tuition is incorrectly budgeted (wrong cost element for this form), None Requested box will be checked. *current parameter default cost element is Tuition - Other - Not MTDC (422311) found in the Other Direct panel of Non-Personnel tab.
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