



Senior Ethics Officer Kimball Johnson, at left, ITS Administrative Intern Monique Pe and Director of ITS Don Stiner recently assisted with upgrading MTA's online lobbyist registration system.

Students' Project Benefits Lobbyists, Ethics and ITS Departments

By AMY HOWELL

(Jan. 7, 2003) A team of six Cal Poly Pomona computer information systems students recently completed a project that streamlined MTA's online lobbyist registration system, reduced staff work and improved data collection and reporting.

MTA's Ethics and Information Technology Services (ITS) departments share responsibility for the system, which enables lobbyists to register via the Internet. ITS administrative intern Monique Pe led the Cal Poly team.

Working with ISD Senior Programmer Analyst Joanne Tran, who originally developed the system, the team periodically consulted with Senior Ethics Officer Kimball Johnson, the primary internal user, to determine what features and modifications were needed to simplify the registration process for lobbyists and staff.

"As a result of what Monique and her team have done, the Ethics Department doesn't have to manually re-key all of the lobbyist registration information anymore," says ITS Director Don Stiner. "It frees up time for a lot more analysis and presents all the relevant data in clear and concise reports."

The Cal Poly team earned an "A" on their Senior Project, a comprehensive assignment required for graduation.

More help, less cumbersome

The new system benefits lobbyists by providing more online registration help and less cumbersome screens. The new system also enables lobbyists to review their registration data prior to submission.

"We wanted a project that would be a challenge for the students and a benefit to us," says Stiner. "They didn't start from scratch—they had an application that worked as originally designed, but one that needed major changes to more closely satisfy current business requirements while upgrading technology."

Pe agrees that the upgrade has improved the lobbyist registration

process. She and her teammates planned an upgrade that would be presented professionally, would be well liked by staff and would be user-friendly for registering lobbyists.

Pe's team initially focused on three of seven registration forms that must be filled out by lobbyists who register online, as well as on several notification letters sent to lobbyists.

Developed an upgrade

They also were asked to develop an upgrade that would electronically transfer registration data to an internal database, eliminating the need for manual re-keying.

The team redesigned the internal and external components of the system, which originally functioned independently, into a unified model. They also rebuilt all of the associated historical data to conform to requirements of the new system.

Additionally, they modified some components of the original system and designed and programmed new components that included a web-based user interface, new databases, front-end screens and automated links.

"When you start designing and developing an application, the most important thing is that the user likes it. If they like it, they're going to use it," Pe says. "According to our client, he really likes the application; he's happy to see it running. That satisfied us at the end of the quarter."

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