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An electronic newsletter for users of Harvard University financial systems, policies, and procedures.

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FAD e-News

STAR Simplification Project [Back](#)

Since it went live in February of 1999, STAR has been a problematic application for Harvard. Many users have found the system too slow, too complicated, and user "unfriendly."

Working with a group of department representatives (the STAR Advisory Group) in the fall and early winter, over seventy potential system simplifications were identified. A mock-up of the simplified system was presented to over 250 STAR end-users in ten sessions University-wide during January and February.

In general, STAR users favored simplification but felt an improved STAR was still not ideal; that improving system performance was critical; and that integration or reducing the number of systems they are using is also needed.

Based on this feedback, Financial Administration began evaluating alternatives such as implementing Oracle's Web Expense application or modifying Web Voucher to support employee reimbursement processing.

After a thorough evaluation, the project team recommended to the STAR Advisory Group, the Financial Deans and the ADAPT Executive Committee that Web Voucher be modified to support employee reimbursements. All of these groups agreed with the proposal, in light of these key benefits:

- one fewer system for users to log onto;

- unified security and authorization makes administration more efficient;
- faster system with one screen for data entry;
- well received application already being used, minimizes retraining;
- implementation can be phased, with STAR running in parallel to minimize disruption to departmental operations;
- approach saves \$500k in development costs and three months development time.

The project team is continuing to work with the STAR Advisory Group to develop a test plan for the prototype system.

The STAR Advisory Group will continue to be the primary point of contact for the project team in the development and implementation of the overall plan.

Please direct your questions and concerns about the project or the new system to your department's representative on the Advisory Group.

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In the Meantime: Making STAR Easier

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Until the modified Web Voucher system is implemented in your area, there are a number of things you can do to make the system easier to use and to let your travel reimbursements flow through the system more smoothly.

Setting Default Account Coding: Set “default” 33-digit account coding for each traveler to minimize repetitive data entry. From the message screen, select the desired traveler profile. Then select employee options, then employee information, then fill in tub-org, activity-subactivity, and root with the values you use most often.

Make sure the reminder prompt is not checked, or you will see an additional screen prompting review of your default coding every time you log in. From the option screen, verify that the “prompt to confirm employee information” reads “no.”

Avoiding Hotel Xpert: Once the Hotel Xpert screen is launched, click the “Skip” icon. After you click “Skip,” STAR will bring you to the green itemization screen. In the upper right-hand corner, you will see an “Exit Itemization” icon. Click that icon and you will move to the next expense type.

Please note that some departments may require you to use Hotel Xpert to itemize hotel charges.

Handling Expense Reports: A reminder that only one STAR expense report should be submitted per envelope. You must send a STAR expense report to the Travel Office to trigger the reimbursement process, even if no receipts are required or submitted (i.e., those less than \$75). Once the Travel Office receives an expense report

and scans the bar code through the envelope window, the reimbursement typically occurs within two or three business days.

FY00 Closing Schedule

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In May, General Accounting will distribute the FY2000 closing schedule via email to financial system end users and local financial offices.

The schedule will include cut-off dates and year-end procedures for processing vendor payments, petty cash fund settlements, credit voucher deposits, the final PCard sweep, travel processing, online journal entries, and cost transfer requests. Year-end reporting tips and the Harvard Data Warehouse (HDW) update schedule for FY00 close data will be included.

Web Voucher System Update

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In response to requests from the end user community, the Web Voucher system has been modified (effective April 24th) to allow each user to set a default approver and a default 33-digit account coding combination.

This change should reduce data entry or the need to query the system and choose a value in many instances. A quick reference guide to setting your defaults is at:

<http://able.harvard.edu/wv/gr/wv103q/index.shtml>

Also a reminder that another system feature—automatic deletion of "fyi only" notifications after five days—has been resident since January. You do not need to open and delete these notifications.

Accounts Payable reports that they are receiving many vendor invoices which have been entered but not yet approved in the Web Voucher system. These "problem" invoices are sent back to the preparers, with vendor payment delayed as a result.

Web Voucher preparers are strongly urged to send the hard copy vendor invoice, with the web voucher number noted, to their approvers. Approvers then review the invoices, approve them in the system, and forward the invoice to central Accounts Payable.

A reminder that the following new or revised forms are in the Web Voucher area of Forms on ABLE:

- a revised Web Voucher Exception Request form, used to request processing of enclosures, credit memos, or payment of invoice copies;
- a revised refund/honorarium request form, used in lieu of an invoice for these payments;
- the Non-Employee Reimbursement Form (NERF), previously available only via KeyForms.

The University policy pertaining to which system to use based on the commodity you are purchasing has been updated. It is featured in this month's "What's New?" section on ABLE.

PCard System Update

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Over 18,600 PCard transactions were processed in March, compared to 6,200 in March of 1999. This is the highest single month on record and usage continues to increase rapidly all over the University.

The Kennedy School of Government continues to lead the way, using the PCard for over 80% of eligible transactions. Congratulations to the

Kennedy School for using the PCard to improve administrative efficiency by reducing paperwork and web vouchers.

Enhancements underway: Some users have indicated they would use the PCard more for high-volume purchases from vendors such as Federal Express, Staples, or VWR Scientific if the settlement system provided a way to cross-reference PCard transactions to paper-based records or local purchase order (PO) systems.

The PCard settlement system was recently modified to provide the airbill number for FedEx transactions, which allows you to cross-reference your copy of the airbill to the transaction in the system. The FedEx airbill number will appear on the PCard settlement system next to the vendor name.

FedEx also offers a web-based product called Internet Ship. If you log on to <http://www.fedex.com> you can fill out an "electronic airbill" and pay using your PCard. Be sure to register your PCard first by calling 1-800-622-1147. To find out more about the features of Internet Ship, please call Rob Reichert at Federal Express at 1-800-448-9916, extension 8143.

Central Procurement is currently working with Staples and VWR Scientific to make available locally provided PO numbers for their PCard transactions in the settlement system. Test data have been passed from these vendors, and system programmers are working to display the PO number on the PCard settlement system. Expect to hear more about this project over the next month.

Reporting Update [Back](#)

The highest priority of the Harvard Data Warehouse (HDW) team is to make sure that our reporting

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applications—AWS2 and HUDINI—and the reports they produce are working well and quickly for fiscal year-end.

Most users have seen dramatic improvements in the performance of the PER (period expense report) and detailed listings recently.

Also of interest to many users is the availability of the “Detailed Listing Lite” report, a version of the report with data removed that many users found extraneous.

This version is easier to read and will result in about a third to a half as much report output. It is now available in HUDINI and is expected to be available in AWS2 by the end of June.

Users are reminded of the critical importance of running "well constrained" reports. Fill in all possible report parameters, including all Chart of Accounts segments, when you order a report.

Leaving a report parameter as "All" can cause serious system performance problems for you and for all other users whose reports are behind you in the queue to be processed.

Also of note, the Vendor Hotline has a dedicated fax number: 496-3196.

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Please send comments, questions, or suggestions for improvement by email to us at:

fad_communications@harvard.edu

If of general interest, we will attempt to answer your questions about University financial systems, policies, or procedures in future editions.

Helpdesk: 6-2001 [Back](#)

A reminder that help—both on technical and business process issues—remains available at 496-2001. All calls are logged, with answers provided or call "tickets" passed on to qualified system or subject matter experts who will call you back and close your "ticket."

The Helpdesk also logs all suggestions for improvements to central systems, which in part influences how Financial Administration prioritizes modifications, enhancements, and fixes.

Financial Administration Training

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The following classes are available for new users as well as continuing users who would benefit from a refresher. Course descriptions and prerequisites are available in the Spring 2000 Center for Training & Development (CTD) brochure. Call your local training liaison or 5-8891 for more information.

Travel and Procurement Offerings

- Harvard University Travel and Reimbursement Policy: May 2 and June 1
- Using STAR: May 4, May 16, May 25, June 6, June 15, June 21, June 29
- Processing Invoices Using Web Voucher: May 4, May 16, May 18, May 25, June 6, June 27

General Ledger Offerings

- Entering and Querying Journals in General Ledger: June 1, June 14, June 27
- Recurring Journals and Automating GL Queries: June 20
- Using Oracle Application Desktop Integrator (ADI) to Upload Journals: May 23
Only authorized users of this application and their supervisors may attend.

Reporting Offerings

- Generating Financial Reports Using AWS2: May 2, May 17, May 24, June 1, June 13, June 22
- Generating Financial Reports Using HUDINI: May 2, May 18, June 20
- Generating Financial Reports Using InfoMaker and the Harvard Data Warehouse (May 16)
Please note this is a fee-supported course. Per student tuition is \$500.
- Analyzing Financial Data in the Harvard Data Warehouse (May 23)
- Analyzing Sponsored Data in the Harvard Data Warehouse (May 3, May 31)
- Analyzing Procurement Data in the Harvard Data Warehouse (June 5)
- Analyzing Payroll Data in the Harvard Data Warehouse (May 3 and June 15)

Sponsored Budget Tool Offerings

- SBT I: Preparation, Policy and Process (May 24, June 21)
- SBT II: Direct Input Method (May 24, June 22)
- SBT III: Spreadsheet Upload Method (May 25, June 22)