*October 30, 2008*

*It is with some trepidation that I recommend the termination of a large scale project in order to use funds for something that will have a better return*

*on investment.*

*The MyUA portal is, I will admit, a pleasant concept. An aggregation of people's university links and a single point of login are both laudable goals.*

*However, it is apparent to most people that the project is stillborn, that millions of dollars have been poured into a failed attempt.*

*The failings of the portal project approach from several angles, any of which would create major issues.*

*Firstly.  Lack of political buy-in.  This should not be an issue, the university should be a united front when it comes to making the student's lives more productive and more pleasant.  It continues to be a crippling one, however.  Initial resentment might have been overcome but as the years stretch on, it becomes clear that several major political players are dead set against the project.*

*Each of them has their own reason, whether logical or personal, but it the fact is that they have the influence to fight this project quite effectively, and continue to do so.*

*Secondly.  Lack of Staff/Student buy-in.  Years have passed, advertisement campaigns have come and gone, and it is looking at something like 4% adoption during the school year amongst university staff and students. I derived this percentage myself by looking into the published unique logins that it experienced in October and comparing to the current university staff and student populations. How you determine buy-in may differ.*

*While this is a tiny percentage of the population using the system, it is a laughable percentage when you consider that UAS has done its best to force everyone at the location to use the system.  I feel that locking people out of their normal access channels is not the same as adoption, but others have disagreed with my assessment.*

*Third.  Severely flawed implementation.  The project is in a perpetual state of collapse.  I am in a staff position that allows me to see roughly what occurs to*

*the system, and it is has a steady stream of broken pieces.*

*I am not claiming that the sungard portal system is in any way fundamentally broken, I do not know enough about the system itself to gauge that.  I do know that the communications and processing failures in the system*

*are perpetual.*

*Fourthly.  Unmaintainable.  Due to a sungard pause in processing, the requirement that the system be upgraded has been postponed for a year.  However, that time is still coming, and the way that the portal was put together makes an upgrade very similar to a reimplementation.  Due textremely poor programming and managerial practices by people who no longer work on the project, it is impossible to inventory the countless customizations that were heaped upon the system in order to make it work to the extent that it does.  The sole remaining programming staff member remaining on the project is going to have the unenviable task of reimplementing an unknown set of years worth*

*of changes.*

*Fifth.  Half a million dollars a year is a lot of money. The official and the politically acknowledged cost of the project's maintenance may differ from my understanding and differ still from the hard figures that are actually tracked by the accounting system, but the fact remains that this is an expensive project.  At ten thousand a year or something on that order, I would be relatively*

*indifferent to what I consider a waste of money, but the scale of the project, and the resources poured into it, means that we should expect a substantial return, and we are simply not seeing it.*

*That sums up my argument for the termination of this incarnation of the portal project.  This is a worthwhile goal, but the project as it stands will never do anything but hobble along, resented by those forced to use it and of middling use to those who want to use it, needing constant technical hand holding because of a terribly weak foundation and nothing resembling the resources for a slash and burn reconstruction.*

*Throwing good money after bad is not the way to increase the service to cost ratio for the university system, no matter whose feelings are hurt.*

*I will be submitting this suggestion anonymously and hope that it stays that way, as there are people several layers up the food chain from me who have Very strong feelings to the contrary on this matter and have shown a historical tendency for morale-crippling public rants and tantrums. I do not care to publicly express my bitter disappointment with the pet project of my boss's boss's boss's boss.*