Responses to Financial Aid Council Concerns and Questions regarding Financial Aid and Student Financials modules in ctcLink

Dec. 2, 2020

Pre Go-Live ctcLink Concerns (for ctcLink Project Team)

Concern/Question	Status/Response
With the GoLive date and prep activities taking place in February, DG4 Financial Aid for 2021-22 processing will be delayed. We need a scheduled Aid Year Rollover ("on the books") as soon as possible after DG4 GoLive so FA staff can begin interacting with continuing and new students about their financial aid status. This includes loading ISIRs, communicating to students about needed information like verification documents, that can take weeks for students to get. Our ability to serve students and impact enrollment for summer 2021 are dependent on us being able to begin processing 21-22. New Year Setup in FAM is in December which allows those schools using FAM to begin communicating with students as early as first of January. Our best hope would be to have Aid Year Rollover happen by early March. Can SBCTC schedule that or possible perform that based on configurations that have been already done for 20-21 (a year that we won't be processing financial aid)? (One more College)	We are planning on doing this activity internally prior to go-live based on lessons learned. However, we are dependent on Oracle releasing its latest Campus Solutions pillar update (PUM 19) with the new aid year updates. Once PUM 19 is released and applied to the ctcLink production and project environments we will work with the DG4 colleges on the plan for the Aid Year Rollover.
Can we schedule the **<u>aid year rollover for all of DG4</u>** before we go live, so we can adequately prepare for our 21-22 year. Loading ISIRs and getting communication to students is imperative. Both Cascadia and Pierce loaded ISIRs into FAM to get communication out to students while waiting for GoLive. This created more manual work on the other end to take tracking information and enter into PS once Aid Year Rollover was done in June. I know that the DG3 schools were not ready for July 1 summer awarding and was into the quarter before students were processed and awarded. Can SBCTC/ctcLink team walk us thru testing and we can actually do that while on webex, that would be great. (College 2)	We are planning on doing this activity internally prior to go-live based on lessons learned. However, we are dependent on Oracle releasing its latest Campus Solutions pillar update (PUM 19) with the new aid year updates. Once PUM 19 is released and applied to the ctcLink production and project environments we will work with the DG4 colleges on the plan for the Aid Year Rollover.
Student Financials and Financial Aid Item Types, Priorities and Refunds are a high risk for all colleges. There are global setups in legacy that could be appropriately cross walked to PS, why have colleges do duplicative work with those item types that are global across the system (including tuition & waivers) and could be done for us? There is information that is known about global item types as well as	Extraction of legacy data was a lost art in the transition of staff on the Project Student Financials team. That group has since received training in the ability to extract and transform legacy data and have re-

disbursement priorities (i.e., which funds must pay first) that could be done for all colleges rather than back and forth with SBCTC to clean up and fix because information isn't clear about the importance of the homework that was attached. (One more College)	implemented this in the BPFG sessions moving forward.
UAT in its current format is just "follow each step in the business process guide", but not an opportunity to really understand the system beyond the steps performed. Is the goal just to get through the UAT processing or to understand the new system? We are unable to really focus on what new processes will need to be modified or changed base on how the system works. **Campus/district problem - we are not talking about changing practices when we should. Who and how is this being facilitated? (College 2)	These items can be addressed if they are brought up during the weekly UAT check-in meetings. We revamped the documentation for FA in response to not having enough detail.
The biggest concern is **SF Item type homework and payment priorities**. It seems that our district accounting and business office is having challenges with SF team at SBCTC. There seems to be a lack of understand previous homework assignments submitted and how it was being used to configure the new system. More clarity is needed for SF and FA to not be problematic once we go live. There any many global item types and award codes, could SBCTC just configures those and take the schools out of it for those item types. Redundant and confused the homework and ultimately some issues with SF crosswalks. (College 2)	This is actually related to homework assignments from BPFG sessions where Student Financials and Financial Aid share responsibility for developing Item Type configurations and the Item Type GL setup that lead to these transactions posting properly to the General Ledger. While some of this is global, there are Item Types that are local to each college and the GL setup is specific to each college. Better collaboration between SF/FA and the Colleges is warranted, but it cannot be done 'for' the colleges absent of their input.
The SBCTC team has provided a lot of material in the ctcLink Reference Center, but the UAT tests documentation isn't not always clear in the steps we need to take as we go through the testing processes, so that could be improved. Maybe more reminders along the way in the document since we are learning a lot of material all at once. The Canvas courses helped, but there are still little things that may not cause as much frustration and unneeded support tickets if we just had those little reminders. (College 5)	The Test Coordination Team has in its plan to incorporate more warnings and tips throughout the UAT materials to improve the experience for future deployment groups. The continual college feedback has allowed us to improve the documentation with each deployment group.

A comprehensive and reliable schedule for workshops is needed to reduce confusion and allow for better communication and training experience and also allow reasonable timing to actively participate and digest information. BPFG "At-a Glance" Schedule was a good example of a clear and concise cross-pillar schedule. SBCTC needs to better evaluate priorities of schedule and include assimilation time for learning the system. (One more College)	The Project team is working on building a production workshop schedule similar to the BPFG at-a-glance calendar.
Do not schedule data validation, UAT, and parallel testing at the same time. This just creates paralysis. Need to prioritize these activities in a logical sequence and provide concise 1-page directions that include all relevant info for each activity (what is the time frame, which environments will be used, where will login information come from, etc.) (One more College)	Moving forward, the project is combining UAT and Cycle #4 Data Validation activities into one activity rather than two separate activities.
The **test schedule** keeps changing and we're all confused about which workshops we need to attend and when. A comprehensive and reliable schedule is needed. **This is a District problem complicated by the lack of security roles being setup correctly. (College 2)	The test schedule has not changed. Training schedules were published and have not altered, though we did agree to deliver one training earlier than scheduled due to a college request. College UAT Testers were to be identified within the security workbook by the deadline of 9/28/2020. We have seen colleges shifting their designated UAT testers after this deadline, which has created conflicts for testers having missed important training sessions and not having security in place. We will work with future DGs on UAT tester designation to ensure the process is clear and executed more effectively.
Issues with security roles not set to give proper access to all FA staff -- Can SBCTC just determine based on previous deployment groups and/or FAM roles and job functions and then have college approve the security role? This was crippling to the DG3 schools and increased efforts to minimize for DG4 were in place however schools experienced up to a week's delay in performing UAT processes while security roles were adjusted. (One more College)	We are working to provide a more comprehensive guide on FA security moving forward.
Security roles are a huge problem. We have lost 10 days of UAT testing due to staff security roles not being correct in the system. Security roles is still a huge issue and	We are working to provide a more comprehensive guide on FA security moving forward.

left us almost a week without being able to move on with UATs for some FA staff. (College 2)	
The main issues we are running into for User Acceptance Testing (UAT) is security access or missing elements that have to be fixed before we can move forward. (College 5)	We are working to provide a more comprehensive guide on FA security moving forward.
Consolidate training. Combine walkthroughs, pain points, and Instructor Led Training and provide this combined info either immediately before or in the first week of the UAT testing period. Distill the information to the most essential for any lecture-style presentations (Turn lengthy PowerPoint slide decks into 2-3 page quick start guides) and then provide hands-on experiential learning for the remaining time. (One more College)	We are looking to make slight modifications for future DGs, but based on lessons learned from previous deployment groups, offering all sessions prior to UAT was not beneficial to the majority of SMEs, as they need to understand the importance of each topic/process while they are "in it" rather than in advance.
All SBCTC-led workshops directed at college SMEs should focus on delivering essential PeopleSoft information, either to generate better configuration outcomes or to illustrate PeopleSoft functionality. The majority of college SMEs will not use the Oracle Test Manager (OTM) software and consequently do not need to learn how to manage this. There is enough information being fire hosed at the colleges that the SBCTC needs to very selective about who should receive training on project-facing tools. (One more College)	The decision to not include testers in OTM was made by college DG4 PMs and is different than DG2/DG3 testers. Some DG4 PMs later changed this approach. There is not a one-size-fits-all approach when colleges manage their test processes differently.
Try to consider the perspective of college SMEs when communicating information about the multiple testing environments. There are numerous environments that we are working in for validation, parallel and UAT testing. The clarity of the multiple environments doesn't happen until after you are in it and struggling with information and processes. How can SBCTC better communicate that early on before thrown in the middle of testing? (One more College)	We can provide college PMs more visual tools to assist in the communications they pass on to their college SMEs.
There is a concern that DG3 schools is still struggling to make disbursements. I had heard that Pierce was having a real rough time but didn't get that from the meeting we had with Susan Maxwell and DG3 PMs in a "briefing" they did 2 weeks ago. (College 2)	The difficulties colleges faced are understandable and due to the steep learning curve of the new FA module. It is not due to a system issue.

Post Go-Live ctcLink Concerns (for ctcLink Customer Support)

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<tr><th>Concern/Question</th><th>Status/Response</th></tr>
<tr><td>Post GoLive support planning for Financial Aid is critical. What support is planned for DG4 that adequately creates a functioning system to ensure that federal compliance is met? Delays in disbursements to students is an audit risk and liability. After DG4 schools GoLive, there will be 50% of the colleges in PS, has support staff been increased to meet needs of all ctcLink schools? (One more College)</td><td>We have added two additional functional team members to the Fin Aid module Customer Support team. If we get AYR done before go-live there is more time to focus on processes vs continued configuration. Additional staff will be added as more colleges go live on ctcLink.</td></tr>
<tr><td>We are requesting the ctcLink FA team host support WebEx's covering topics beyond start of term and initial disbursement. Processes that we would like to see covered include:
• Census date processing: The BPG for this process provides limited instructions for running the process and queries to flag enrollment changes. There are no instructions for upward or how to validate and post downward recalculations of aid to create overpayments on student accounts.
• Return of Title IV processing: Content in the reference center is not in sequential order. Documentation does not exist for R2T4 issues including rebuilding budgets when students drop all credits between days 1-10 or posting and validating award adjustments to create the return of funds.
• Year-Round Pell: Need more detail on when to run this process and how to award the additional Pell Grant item type to students. Not clear if this should be run after summer or closer to spring?
• Reconciliation of accounts: The videos in the reference center are helpful for running the report and identifying screens used to troubleshoot issues. Need details on the mechanics of how to fix records.
• Satisfactory Academic Progress: Need more detail on how/when to run SAP processing and identifying status clean-ups needed for situations where status does not calculate correctly.
• Queries, documentation and processes available for managing/troubleshooting "exception" type scenarios including:
o Aid package revisions made when validating subsequent awards,
o Issues preventing FA term build,</td><td>ctcLink Customer Support is holding the first session on Dec 11th about awarding and resolving over-awards.
For the new year there will be a schedule that rotates: Fin Aid, Stu Fin, CS core and cross-pillar.
We are looking to meet weekly with all live colleges to communicate priorities.

This list was given to DG3 institutions and prioritized. This prioritization was what informed which topic we needed to address first (on December 11).</td></tr>
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o Over-awards • **Job-set maintenance**: Some processes running in our nightly job-set are term specific. When and how do we update these for the next term? • **3Cs and COMM GEN**: Documentation does not include queries available to use in assigning communications. Queries found do not have detailed descriptions in MetaLink. • **Verification**: The "Processing Federal Verification" documentation in the reference center only covers completing checklist items and updating the student status. There is no documentation for reviewing the ISIR data, correcting records, and student coding status changes as records are transmitted out/in of PS. • **Professional Judgments**: There is no documentation for the process of adjusting income on an ISIR for a change in financial circumstances. • **General record maintenance** for year-end reporting: We weren't able to test our Unit Record Reporting in UAT and I am not clear on the processes we need in place to maintain accurate data for reporting. Areas of concern include: o Accounting for non-FA waivers, o Maintaining budgets months and costs only for terms where aid was received since budgets build and assign for all terms including those where a student may not be receiving aid • **Fiscal item types**, **budgeting and packaging plan maintenance**: More detail on understanding information displayed in fiscal item types to support budgeting of awards with limited funding. How to maintain packaging plans when funds are exhausted in one item type and the "accepted" item type needs replaced with the "waitlisted" item type. (College 3)	
Our team is struggling in the conversion of Financial Aid to PS and need more support and intentionality around creating common practices that support us in our efforts to stay in compliance. (College 3)	As we receive college feedback, we are working to improve the documentation. It is important to point out that colleges are responsible for compliance and many college financial aid practices are based on local college interpretations of federal regulations, some may not be "common."

ABE graded course and FA SAP. The latest ticket opened on 02/03/2020 was #85395 (On Hold). In a nutshell (more details are in the ticket), ABE graded or non-graded courses negatively affect FA SAP which creates barriers for students to progress from ABE/GED/ESL classes to regular college courses. Also, every quarter we have to manually override/update hundreds of SAP records, which is very time consuming. (College 1) Strengthen SAP to avoid counting ABE/HS classes, etc. (College 4)	Currently testing a new grading basis to eliminate these courses from the SAP process
Improve how to discount BASED credits from SAP Calculation Results (College 7)	Currently testing a new grading basis to eliminate these courses from the SAP process
SAP in general has many different issues, and SBCTC agreed to propose a modification, but we believe it's on hold now. (College 1)	Yes, we agreed to put some of the requests on hold until all colleges are on ctcLink. We made that decision because we need to make sure those modifications will work for all colleges as SAP is a local business process due to the local interpretation of federal regulations.
Satisfactory Academic Progress: Need more detail on how/when to run SAP processing and identifying status clean-ups needed for situations where status does not calculate correctly. (College 3)	We are currently working on refining Financial Aid documentation to add these types of additional details.
Strengthen SAP to identify when life time remedials are exhausted (College 4)	We will look into improving the documentation around this process
Loans: Using Multiple Disbursement ID's for per Term. Ticket #01/31/2020 (closed). Will not be worked on until the project is wrapped up (all schools are converted) (College 1)	Ticket # ? need more information to look into this and follow up
We'd like to look into using multiple disbursement ID's per term for Direct Loans so we can increase them when necessary (this is in the Setting up Packaging Basics in 9.2") (College 1)	Ticket # ? need more information to look into this and follow up
All Direct Lending loan item types can support the concept of a disbursement plan and split code scheme that supports multiple disbursement IDs within a term. COD currently supports up to 20 total disbursements per loan application for both Stafford and PLUS loans. (College 1)	Ticket # ? need more information to look into this and follow up
FA Award Notification issues: FA Award notification displays "sums" of the awards incorrectly, which confuses students. It shows sums of the awards after each item type instead of the terms' sums.	This is a global functionality and would need to go through the governance process to

1. Ticket #85078 opened on 01/28/2020 (on hold) 2. Ticket #99122 opened on 10/22/2020 (open) 3. Ticket #96868 (College 1)	ensure the modification meets all colleges' needs.
Business Process Guides (BPG') go through step-by-step instructions (sometimes missing major pieces), but don't answer the questions while going through a process of "what if I select this option, instead of that option", or "how does this affect what I am doing". The lack of "why and what" we are doing in the process is left out when reviewing just step-by-step guides. Also, because not every piece always pertains to a function of what you are doing, often, by skipping around in BPG's, you can end up missing key pieces of information. (College 6)	We are currently working at reconfiguring this information in the reference center to provide "why" and "what next" information. Provides product/system information, colleges have their own local policies and procedures on how to disburse FA
Business Process Guides are not updated at same rate as QRGs. Financial Aid BPG contains all(?) essential steps in [relative] sequence for critical processes such as Disbursement of Aid. Example: • Process Award Authorization is the preliminary step to actual Disbursement. The QRG for PAA includes instructions for running a specific query to review what has actually been authorized and allow for solving issues prior to disbursement. The BPG does not include this step. We have been operating without this critical element for months because we are working from the BPG published in June of 2020. There are too many processes to go searching for each one to see if it is the latest update. • Making sure our resources have ALL the information available will make our jobs much more efficient (and even enjoyable). (College 7)	We are currently working at reconfiguring this information in the reference center to provide "why" and "what next" information
Support Materials Incomplete. This is related to other issues mentioned. Most of the BPGs and QRGs have essential information included but often fail to illustrate the true flow of operations. It is common for process flow to cross departmental boundaries. The support materials break things into the little components but often do not explain how things fit into the big picture. Example: • Pre-CTCLink, Direct Loan Administrators received a detailed manual with explicit steps for processing loans. It included steps from setup to awarding to DOD transmission to reconciliation. Most importantly, it included actual narrative and explanation of the tasks and where it all fit. The current BPGs have most of the essential data, but lack the contextual overview required to understand what really needs to be done.	We are currently working at reconfiguring this information in the reference center to provide "why" and "what next" information It is important to note that this does not replace the responsibility of the college to make sure that the staff know all the policies and procedures required to perform their work (Federal, state and local).

• Terry has referred to the situation by using a parallel as follows: It is like using navigation in your car to get somewhere. You take all the correct turns and reach your destination. However, you really have no idea how you got there, why the route was taken, and maybe not be sure where you actually are. (College 7) Continue to add process documentation to the reference center (College 4) Update reference center documentation with processes to resolve errors. (College 4)	
Troubleshooting. The BPGs and QRGs do a good job of explaining how to perform a specific task or group of tasks. They are designed under the assumption that everything is and will work perfect. However, there is not much information on troubleshooting errors and problems. It is impossible to work in this environment and not have an issue with something. • A Best Practices Guide, or even include things like that in the BPG/WRG, would be most helpful to those of us on the front lines. (College 7)	We are currently working at reconfiguring this information in the reference center to provide “why” and “what next” information.
Overall, we know new processes will have to be built, and yet something as simple as “who do we need to award and in what order”, isn’t spelled out anywhere. We can’t seem to pull a list of ISIR’s received to include a date and there are “ways” to do it, but we just have to figure it out as we go. This seems like a basic function of the awarding process, and is missed in any BPG’s. (College 6)	Documentation has been revised to include queries to pull this information.
There are some idiosyncrasies of the system that we have had to find out on our own. I can understand that, however it makes it difficult when we are going through processes and things are working, if we need to wonder whether there really is a problem, or is it another “that’s just how the system works”? We don’t find out the importance of something that we may have learned in passing, until it is now a problem. It seems very reactive rather than proactively learning how the system functions. (College 6)	This is true. While there are a standard set of state and federal regulations, each college locally determines how their college will adhere to them. The ctcLink Customer Support organization can provide basic system usage, but may not always have insight into the creative solutions each individual college has developed to meet their way of interpreting and meeting those regulations. This is where the information available from HEUG (Higher Education User

	Group) can provide greater insight into creative solutions as this system is used nationwide to meet the varying needs of Financial Aid Offices.
Queries are not as they appear/or are identified – I have run many queries, thinking I am getting a result, and either have to determine on my own that the list is not how it should appear, or even worse, find out months later the query did not pull ALL of the students it should have (based on the title and description) which makes us out of compliance. We are unable to quickly build queries on our own (unless perhaps a school has a technical query writer on their team), and have to rely on SBCTC Support to even help us find the appropriate query in many instances. (College 6)	The full inventory of queries is a blend of Data Services developed queries and those developed locally by other colleges in our system. Like with a Data Express procedure, it takes comprehensive knowledge of the data underlying the query and how the data is being pulled from the system before staking an institution's liability. If a college wants clarity on how an existing query has been developed a Question ticket can be filed with the Data Services team to review the query structure to assure themselves of its fit for purpose.
Viewing and Deciphering Customer Accounts is convoluted, confusing, and very labor intensive. It takes multiple clicks just to try to find what fund (Financial Aid, Cash, Waiver) paid off each charge on the account. If we are trying to trace financial aid payment, it takes a lot of precious time. • The ability to actually Print an account summary for the student would be most helpful. • A clean, simple query (one with only essential fields) would be even better (College 7)	Yes, the Student Financials system screens are a significant knowledge transition from the simplistic legacy Customer Accounts screen (BM1625). Colleges are provided the ability to receive Query Management training and develop queries that suit an individual college's needs.
Different screens show different data about the same student. Example: • The Enrollment Summary page shows the enrollment status of a student. If the student has withdrawn, it is indicated on this screen. However, from that screen you can click the link to "Print Study List". The study list will not reflect the withdrawal. • There are other instances with differences between Student Accounts and what shows up on Student Center. (College 7)	Need specifics to address concern. As this is a delivered product, the ctcLink Customer Support team can review whether this issue has been reported to Oracle as a defect of the product. The discrepancy could also be a time issue.

Improve how to “lock in” award amounts disbursed in prior terms when making a custom split adjustment, so that re-entry of all award amounts for that FA Type is not required • Example: Bookstore accounts which require quarterly adjustments. (College 7)	As this is a delivered product it is unclear whether this request is asking for an Enhancement Request to delivered baseline code, or a better process direction. SF is very different from Customer Accounts in legacy and colleges may find better approaches to using these modules with their real time integration within the material/information provided by other seasoned users through HEUG (Higher Education User Group) before pursuing a major code change that could complicate and delay the delivery of a PUM release.
We’d like to look into using multiple disbursement ID's per term for Direct Loans so we can increase them when necessary (this is in the Setting up Packaging Basics in 9.2") (College 1)	Ok, while ctcLink Customer Support is there to provide basic production knowledge, a college choosing an approach beyond that is recommended to review HEUG (Higher Education User Group) for other colleges who have pursued this practice and the implications of such a choice.
CHEMLI for WCG/CBS to operate in the same fashion as Pell in awarding/repackaging aid (College 4)	Any adjustments to an existing CEMLI would go through the normal Enhancement Request process via ctcLink governance. It is recommended to go through FAC and then WSSSC for a consolidated revision that colleges can agree to before going to Working Group.
Printing is very limited and difficult. Documentation of student enrollment and financial activity is critical for record keeping and auditing. Printing an accurate class schedule, account summary, or grade report is challenging (due to permissions) and also cumbersome. We should all be able to access the basic information about any student. We have all signed confidentiality agreements and work with all of their most sensitive information (SSN, DOB, Marital Status, etc…). We should be able to have access to the basics in order to support out work. (College 7)	This may be a good topic at a future Campus Solutions SMEs Workshop.

R2T4 processing could be improved. Although it is helpful to pull detail directly into the calculation, the resulting information is not thorough or helpful. I am continuing to use ED’s version on COD access. (College 7)	This may be a good topic at a future FA SMEs Workshop.