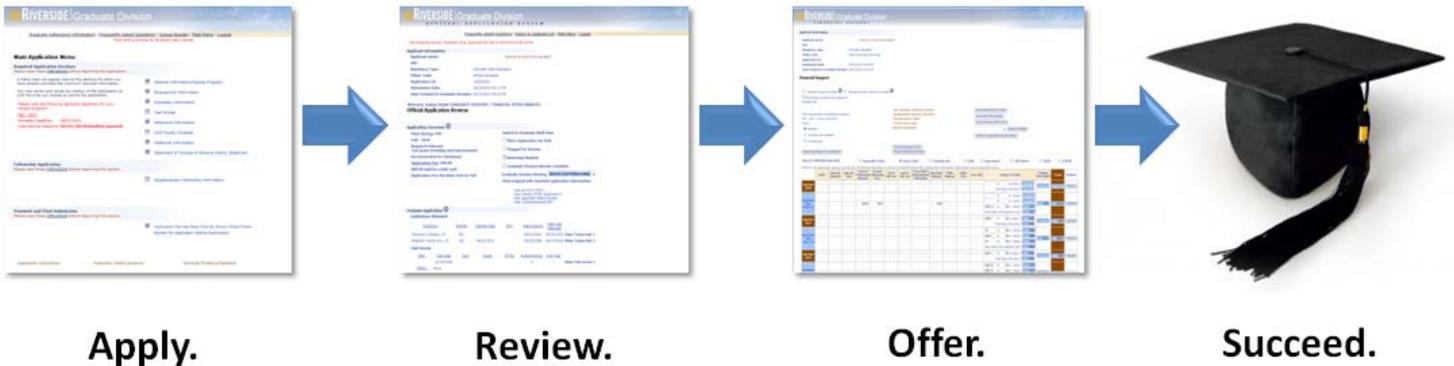# Grad SIS Online Graduate Admissions System

Computing & Communications

"The development of Grad SIS for UCR is an extraordinary advancement towards the efficiency and success of graduate student recruitment. While all UC campuses have an online graduate application process, UCR is the only UC campus with an online graduate application, evaluation and admissions process. This innovative program drastically reduces the need for paper documents, files and signatures while permitting multiple department users to review and process applicant information instantly. It is a major transition from the old paper-shuffling process to a streamlined electronic environment."
          -Victoria Long, Director of Graduate Admissions, UCR Graduate Division

Overview

The highly competitive world of graduate admissions requires campuses and graduate programs to be efficient, agile and highly responsive in order to secure the best graduate students. In Grad SIS, UCR has developed a tool that enables campus graduate programs to exhibit precisely these qualities. Grad SIS is a comprehensive, end to end web-based graduate admissions system that allows UCR to successfully pursue its stated objective of increasing both graduate enrollment and quality of graduate students, in service to the campus' overall research mission and stated objective of meeting the Association of American Universities (AAU) research university profile.

Highlights

Grad SIS represents a leap forward for the graduate admissions process in efficiency, transparency and effectiveness. These improvements are achieved through the following key features of Grad SIS:

- *Intelligent Online Application* - Applicants complete the entire application online through a dynamic, user-responsive web interface and submit instantaneously with payment using a major credit card.

- *Online Recommendation Submission* – Applicant recommenders submit letters of recommendation online through a secure and intuitive web interface that supports uploads of Word/PDF documents, or direct input.

- *Integrated Enterprise Access* – Campus faculty & staff access Grad SIS via UCR's campus portal, with single-sign on integration & roles controlled via UCR's Enterprise Access Control System (EACS).

- *Completely Online Review* – Campus faculty & staff review and provide comment on the entire application file, including all supporting documents, online, simultaneously and from anywhere in the world. Admissions committees are departmentally defined and members have access to each other's comments and rankings at all times.

- *Comprehensive Financial Offer Creation* – Graduate advisors and/or graduate program staff create the complete applicant financial package through Grad SIS' financial support system and validate against a comprehensive suite of business rules for graduate financial support.

- *Flexible Electronic Routing* – Graduate programs route applicant files amongst program constituents and to/from UCR's Graduate Division instantaneously, based on EACS role assignments. Graduate Division can augment program financial offers and immediately route for program approval, enabling rapid admissions decisions.

- *Online Admissions Decision & Response* – UCR's Graduate Division completes their review of applicant files and extends offers of admission, including any applicable financial support, to applicants via email. Applicants review admissions decisions and indicate their response online, with results instantaneously communicated the Graduate Division and graduate program.

- *Full Post-Admissions Processing* – All post-admissions processing, including the collection of I-20-related immigration information for foreign applicants, is completed online within the system by applicants & Graduate Division staff.

- *Student Information System Integration* – Grad SIS is integrated with and passes all relevant applicant information to UCR's Student Information System (SIS+), the campus system of record for academic & student information.

- *Real-Time Tracking & Reporting* – Graduate Division and graduate programs have access to updates via real-time reporting on the number of applicants, submitted application statuses, performance relative to admissions targets and all fellowship information, in both granular and aggregate forms.

- *One Campus-wide System – Admissions information & processing is completed through one single system for all UCR graduate programs, including professional schools.*

Project Details

- The creation of Grad SIS was a multi-year effort, involving campus colleges, professional schools and central offices including Finance & Business Operations.

- This collaborative endeavor yielded one system that is meeting the needs of all graduate programs, from the Masters of Fine Arts in Music to the PhD in Chemical & Environmental Engineering.

- The comprehensive nature of the Grad SIS development effort resulted in a tool that is both a recruitment vehicle as well as an important financial control & monitoring application.

- The technical highlights of the system include the following:

  o Grad SIS utilizes UCR's standard Oracle/Solaris enterprise platform.

  o Grad SIS uses Central Authentication Services (CAS) for sign on. CAS, which is freely available, was originally created by Yale University and is now overseen by Jasig.

  o Grad SIS uses UCR's enterprise routing & workflow engine, the Enterprise Access Control System (EACS). Roles & permissions are not stored locally within Grad SIS, but instead are abstracted and maintained within EACS.

  o Grad SIS makes extensive use of web services to execute real-time business edits and for transparent integration with other campus databases & systems.

- o UCR's Student Information System (SIS+) is automatically updated by Grad SIS, including the automated creation of matriculations for newly admitted students, setting & release of holds on student records, and updates of applicant information throughout the application process.

Feedback

The development of Grad SIS for UCR is an extraordinary advancement towards the efficiency and success of graduate student recruitment. While all UC campuses have an online graduate application process, UCR is the only UC campus with an online graduate application, evaluation and admissions process. This innovative program drastically reduces the need for paper documents, files and signatures while permitting multiple department users to review and process applicant information instantly. It is a major transition from the old paper-shuffling process to a streamlined electronic environment.

–Victoria Long, Director of Graduate Admissions, UCR Graduate Division

Grad SIS has streamlined many aspects of the graduate recruitment/admissions process. Faculty appreciate the ability to examine student admissions files at any time, from any location - completely eliminating a previous problem of lost files (i.e., files went missing when faculty removed them from the grad assistant's office). Feedback from grad student applicants has been uniformly positive - many state that UCR's online admissions process was much easier than that of other institutions. As graduate advisor I have appreciated the ability to make quick changes to financial offers, and to have near instantaneous routing of files to graduate division. The graduate admissions process is hectic at best, and Grad SIS has proven to be a very useful tool to improve the efficiency of everyone involved.

– Christine Chiarello, Professor & Graduate Advisor, Department of Psychology

I became involved fairly early in the development of this program as the Graduate Advisor representative to the Steering Committee for this project. The Steering Committee met regularly with the CNC staff, Graduate Division Dean and other stakeholders to guide the development of the program. The result is a program that has greatly expanded both the functionality available to graduate programs and the efficiency with which graduate advisors and staff can review, recommend and admit graduate students. Grad SIS not only made it possible for me to do my job as graduate advisor more efficiently, it enabled me to do my job better. The responsiveness of the CNC staff to suggestions for both new functions and improved interfaces has resulted in a program that is intuitive to use while meeting the needs of a diverse group of users ranging from prospective graduate students to faculty to the Graduate Dean.

– Cynthia K. Larive, Professor & former Graduate Advisor, Department of Chemistry

I would like to thank you for your recent presentation to the Graduate Committee in the Department of English and for your role in the design of the new GRAD SIS system. I was incredibly impressed with the on line form and system and found it all much easier to navigate than eFile. I was our department's Director of Graduate Admissions for the past three years and can speak from that informed position; the new on-line system appears to make the reading of files easier and more efficient. I am also presently a member of the Chancellor's Strategic Action Plan subcommittee on excellence in graduate education. The system also seems like it will make it easier for Graduate Division to calculate data and track admitted graduate students from the earliest stages of application to the penultimate stages of degree obtained.

> –Tiffany Ana Lopez, Associate Professor & former Graduate Advisor, Department of English

Grad SIS has drastically changed the way that we review and process graduate applications. We now have a streamlined, comprehensive mechanism with no duplication of efforts. All of the review is now done on-line so we no longer have the need to print lengthy application files. My department had a 43% increase in graduate applications this year which were we easily able to handle because of Grad SIS.

> – Cheryl Gerry, Management Services Officer, Department of Chemical & Environmental Engineering

Grad SIS has been an asset to graduate recruitment on several different levels. The incoming graduate students love it. The first year we used it we invited 45 prospective graduate students to campus for our graduate recruitment weekend. We asked them how they liked using Grad SIS. All of them expressed their satisfaction with the program and wished that other university's they applied to had such an easy application process. They also liked the immediate feedback they received from the system and the ability to look up their information and see where they were in the process. The use of Grad SIS has also been beneficial at the department level. The faculty are able to view files on-line and no longer need to come to the department office to review paper files. This has sped up the graduate recruitment process as faculty can review files from anywhere and send their recommendations to the graduate advisor.

> – Dianne Fewkes, Management Services Officer, Department of Psychology

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On the Web

Application Site: https://gradsis.ucr.edu

Support Site: http://cnc.ucr.edu/gradsis

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