



FSA *Now*

The Monthly Newsletter for FSA Staff & Operating Partners

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IN THIS ISSUE

FSA's future
"architecture" plans
Page 2

New addition to the
Communications
Channel, read about it in
Extra! Extra!
Page 2

Highlights from Sec.
Paige's January All
Hands meeting
Page 2

My FSA interviews new
acting CIO Jerry
Schubert
Page 3

FSA Receives Clean Audit

Secretary Rod Paige held a press conference February 12, to discuss the past 18 months of management improvements at the Department and highlighted ED and FSA's clean audit.

Joining the Secretary at the press conference were Terri Shaw, Vicki Bateman, Tom Pestka and Linda Paulsen. Sec. Paige thanked Terri for her leadership in ensuring that FSA's financial data was timely and efficient and called FSA a tremendous organization. The press conference also recognized Tom and Linda for their participation on

the management improvement team and Vicki for her work on the audit.

Reporters from *ED Daily*, *National Journal*, *Federal Computer Week* and *Chronicle of Higher Education* attended the press conference. Terri responded to questions on the GAO High Risk List and the specific steps FSA was taking to address the outstanding issues. The Secretary commented on Terri's response, noting the "passion in her voice" as she described FSA's focus on getting student aid programs removed from GAO's list.

The 4 P's: Project, Program, Performance and Progress

Jane Sisco is part of the team creating a centralized program management office (PMO) as part of the proposed FSA organizational change. The office will oversee and ensure the effectiveness of the agency's numerous system integration initiatives.

According to its charter, the PMO's goals are to integrate all project activity within FSA and link it to our plan priorities and strategic objectives. Additionally, the team will facilitate the optimal use of resources to ensure that FSA delivers effective, quality applications.

"FSA is already a project-driven organization with talented and well-trained managers, a well-conceived project methodology and a thorough and disciplined project review and prioritization process," commented Jane. "With our collective efforts, we will be able to make FSA a center of excellence for project management."

The PMO start-up team is working on several

initiatives. One of its biggest tasks is transitioning Accenture program management to FSA. For example, FSA recently took over the bi-weekly reporting on the progress of Accenture's projects. Also, the team will help FSA adopt the Solution Life Cycle, a set of common methods for project management and systems acquisition.

The team is also completing an inventory of FSA projects. This inventory will serve as a central balance sheet, listing and categorizing every FSA project, its resources, status, priority and timetable. The PMO staff seeks to place the inventory results on an FSA-wide database. The new project inventory should help to increase accountability throughout the organization and would position FSA for the future preparation of a project-based budget.

"We are aware that the one-size-fits-all approach

*Please see **The 4 P's**, page two*

The 4 P's

Continued from page one

to setting up a PMO is unlikely to work. We are striving to establish a PMO that supports FSA in three areas – its people, its common methods and techniques, and its systems and tools. Toward this end, we are currently doing an assessment of the organization's current project management environment and capabilities so that we will understand what type of PMO is the best fit for FSA and what functions it should perform in the future," concluded Jane.

The PMO's staff currently consists of Jane, who recently joined FSA from SatoTravel, and two FSA employees on detail, Carole Kuriatnikova from CIO and Linda Hall from Students Channel.

Security and Privacy Architecture: Integrated!

In the upcoming months, FSA will design an integrated security and privacy architecture to improve program integrity and FSA products and services. This initiative is one of 18 major goals of the 2003 Performance Plan.

Like other information technology "architectures," a security and privacy architecture is a conceptual plan used to guide system design and development. Our security architecture will help defend FSA information systems from various computer security threats, protects the personal information of FSA's customers and assures that FSA systems are there when customers need them.

"Security and privacy really are the heart and soul of this organization," said Andy Boots, project manager. "Students and parents give us their private information, and we need to be worthy of that trust. We're not going to lose it."

Previously, FSA's systems have been built so each system handles security and privacy differently, making integration of our systems difficult. The Performance Plan envisions an integrated security and privacy architecture as the first step in building security functions into the common set of reusable components, so each new system could simply "plug-in."

The data within FSA systems would be more secure and expansion of FSA systems would become easier, supporting FSA in its goals to integrate technology initiatives.

The Performance Plan calls for completion of the security and privacy architecture by April or May, with additional security and privacy services possibly added by the end of FY03.

EXTRA! EXTRA!

New Addition to Communications Staff

Effective January 13, 2003, Marianna O'Brien became a special advisor in the Communications office. Before Marianna joined FSA Communications, she was vice president and general manager of Optimum Public Relations in Falls Church, Virginia.

It's Time for a Change

Secretary Paige addressed One ED and the Department's reputation at the All-Hands meeting January 30, 2003. He said that the Department should make excellence and professionalism a priority because the "Department protects the national interest of and provides a national perspective for education for all Americans." Paige also spoke about why change is integral to the Department's success. He said, "Progress means change. You can't make progress and keep doing things the same way."

FSA Now

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FSA Now is a monthly newsletter for FSA staff and operating partners available on FSA Net. To share feedback or contribute ideas, email FSA Communications, or contact Karen Santos Freeman.



My FSA

FSANow sat down with acting CIO Jerry Schubert to discuss his new job in FSA and CIO's projects for 2003

Q: What do you most enjoy about being at FSA, so far?

A: I like being a part of a performance-based organization. I also really enjoy the idea of helping people go to school.

Q: What are some of your personal goals for CIO?

A: My goals are to get a better understanding of the entire student aid process. I also want to forge strong relationships with all of the business units in FSA.

Q: What are some of CIO's goals for 2003?

A: CIO's goals are to work to get off the High Risk List by strengthening financial controls, to continue integrating FSA's systems and also to support business units in areas where needed.

Q: In your opinion, what will be the most exciting integration project this year?

A: One of our most exciting projects this year is a joint project with Kay Jacks and the Schools Channel called Data Strategy. Data Strategy will figure out the best approach for FSA to use, process and display data, which is a fundamental building block for FSA's future success.

Q: Tell us about your family.

A: I have been married for 23 plus years to my wife Peggy. I have three children, two girls and boy: Katie, Jerry and Maureen.

Q: If you could describe yourself to the FSA staff in three words, what words would you choose? Why?

A: I would say I am a listener, because the answers you need come from everywhere. I am direct, because it is easier and causes less confusion. The last description is a phrase, "Whatever it takes," because that is what I will do to accomplish a goal.

Q: Tell us about your previous professional experience. How will these experiences influence your work here at FSA?

A: I worked in information technology in the private sector field for 27 plus years and gained a wide range of experiences in both applications and operations. A good portion of my experience dealt with student aid delivery and services. The largest periods of time were spent with Sallie Mae. I was with them from 1981 to 1987 and from 1997 to 2000. In between I was with the NRECA (National Rural Electric Cooperative Association) in Arlington. I left retirement after two years to come to work here at FSA.

Coming Next Month....

Meet the new Communications chief in *My FSA*

Learn more about FSA's strategic goals and initiatives