Integrated University Information Systems and Information System Strategy

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Abstract: The growing autonomy of European universities comes with a more entrepreneurial approach to governance. I.e., universities mutate from subordinated agencies of the respective ministry to independent corporate bodies that are to be managed professionally similar to enterprises of comparable size. This requires a more entrepreneurial way of thinking, decision making and acting from the leading bodies, and as a consequence, leads to a more strategic weight of the supporting information systems: all "University Processes" (i.e. the business processes of the "enterprise" University) have to be integrated and interlinked with decision support systems on the different management levels.

The Alpen-Adria-Universität (AAU) aims at being in the front line concerning IT-support for its students, staff, and University Processes. Thereby, it emphasizes strategically on self organization and self service by researchers, teachers and students. I.e., the classical counter served by administrative clerks is "out", all service processes are tailored to the needs of students and staff and to their respective context in a particular situation, i.e. use case. This includes barrier-free interfaces for persons with disabilities or special needs as well as localized services and the integration of specific infra structures.

The way to an integrated management information system that meets all needs of a flexibly acting university management is still a long one to go. Among others, this is due to the fact that the development of individual university profiles which comes with the increasing autonomy leads to specialization and thus to the opposite of a standardization of the university processes. At the other hand however, research, teaching and vocational training still are the key processes of a university, to which the university organization as well as all other processes have to be aligned with.

Typically, the scenery of information systems, software products and data warehouse systems used in a university is stepwise grown, inhomogeneous and mostly consists of locally developed software as well as of open source and proprietary standard products that are only partly harmonized by standard data exchange interfaces.

The speech outlines the AAU Information System Strategy and sketches the architecture of the AAU information system scenery, the services offered as well as the philosophy behind the realization. In addition, it discusses potential for the transition from project to product development. Finally, emphasis will be put on the AAU full costing approach and system which was developed recently in order to provide maximum cost transparency and comprehensive information to support decision making on all levels.