

Informs Summary Information

Introduction

Information Management Specialists, Inc. (*Informs*) is a software engineering and information technology firm headquartered in Montgomery, Alabama. For the past twenty-seven years, *Informs* has been providing state and local governments and higher education institutions with custom government procurement software and a student information system package. What sets *Informs* apart from its competitors is its strong commitment to customer service and the long-term relationships it has developed with its clients.

Higher Education

Open source, or freely available, software has been gaining in popularity since the late 1990s. Today, Linux is a credible, free, and widely-used computer operating system. Providers of critical middleware such as database management systems and Internet application servers offer open source versions of their products. Application software released as open source is now available to higher education institutions. From Sakai (a course management system), to Quali (a financial management system) to e-Portfolio (an electronic portfolio management system), open source alternatives to vendor licensed software are offering significant advantages in terms of controlling software costs; increasing the quality of service; providing software that is reliable, secure, scalable; and, finally, is affordable to institutions of any size.

Recognizing the substantial advantages this alternative offers to higher education, Information Management Specialists, Inc. (*Informs*) has developed the first open source student services system, SIS^{J2K} (Java for the 21st century).

To remain competitive in today's higher education landscape, institutions must meet the complex challenge of providing scalable, self-service capabilities that focus on the constantly shifting needs of all student services users. You need a system that allows for flexibility and expandability while remaining reliable, secure and cost effective.

Student Information System (SIS^{J2K})

SIS^{J2K} provides your institution with a student services system built on an open source, open standards, and open architecture framework. It allows you to combine "industry best practices" with your institution's "unique best practices" to exercise greater control over the future development of your mission-critical, enterprise-wide student services applications. The flexible design of SIS^{J2K} enables institutions of all sizes to make configuration changes online without having to customize the baseline software.

Informs began its higher education practice by providing a Cobol-based SIS package primarily to IBM mainframe and IBM Unix-based institutions of higher education. Since 1995, we have been providing student information software and support services to medical schools, public and private universities, and university systems.

Informs' new product, SIS^{J2K}, is built on the company's seventeen years of experience installing, implementing and supporting higher education software. Realizing the benefits derived from an open technology framework, *Informs* chose to re-design the already powerful functionality of its "legacy" system product by incorporating state-of-the-art technologies and industry-proven design patterns. The modular design of SIS^{J2K} makes it easier to install and minimizes the risks associated with migrating from your legacy system to an innovative architectural platform built on the Java 2 Enterprise Edition (J2EETM) standard.

Product Information

SIS^{J2K} maximizes your institution's ability to do more with less by building on the capabilities of an open architecture that facilitates best-of-breed functionality at a significantly reduced cost. Implemented fully or as individual modules, our solution enables more consistent, effective and safe access to student data by administrators, students, and parents alike. The total SIS^{J2K} product line consists of:

- Common: provides a single repository for all biographic and demographic information;
- Admission: allows each admission office to independently define its policies and procedures;
- Housing: accommodates both a hotel-environment room assignment feature, in addition to the traditional room assignment process for students;
- Financial Aid: supports rapid response to federally mandated regulatory changes which require software modifications throughout the year;
- Student Records: provides institutions with rule-based processors to manage and evaluate academic progress without having to customize the baseline software; and
- Student Accounts: serves as a clearing house for all financial activity for both students and third party sponsors paying for students' tuition and fees.

The *Informs* architecture provides institutions with a solution that:

- Runs on a variety of hardware and software platforms;
- Utilizes the J2EETM development standard;
- Supports an n-tier architecture in which the presentation, business, and data tiers are separated by logical and, if desired, physical boundaries; and
- Employs source code that is independent of platform, application server, database, and web browser consideration.