Letter of Intent

Michael Sessa
President and CEO
PESC - Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council
1250 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 200
Washington, D.C. 20036

September 14, 2011

Re: Letter of Intent

Dear Michael Sessa,

I am pleased to submit this letter to notify PESC that the California Community College Technology Center intends to work collaboratively with the higher education community to develop a web services network for educational data exchange.

The proposed network would be developed using an open source model and employ PESC's EA2 and DTS standards with EdUnify as a registration service. Any provider using these standards and registered in the service network could then communicate directly with the appropriate exchange host for a targeted institution. The services would be 'payload agnostic' and while our immediate interest is for transcript exchange, the network could be used for the exchange of other existing or future PESC standard transactions.

This following organizations have indicated their support for this effort:

- AcademyOne
- ConnectEDU
- Credentials Solutions
- National Student Clearinghouse
- Parchment Inc.
- Pearson
- UT-Austin
- Xap Corporation
- Other?

The attached Business Case describes the historical overview, justification and a description of the planned collaboration.

We look forward to working through PESC with other members of the higher education community on this project as we believe it will provide a platform for significant improvement in the efficiency of communications among participating institutions.

Sincerely

Tim Calhoon, Director
California Community Colleges Technology Center

Business Case
For The Establishment Of A Web Service Network
For Educational Data Exchange

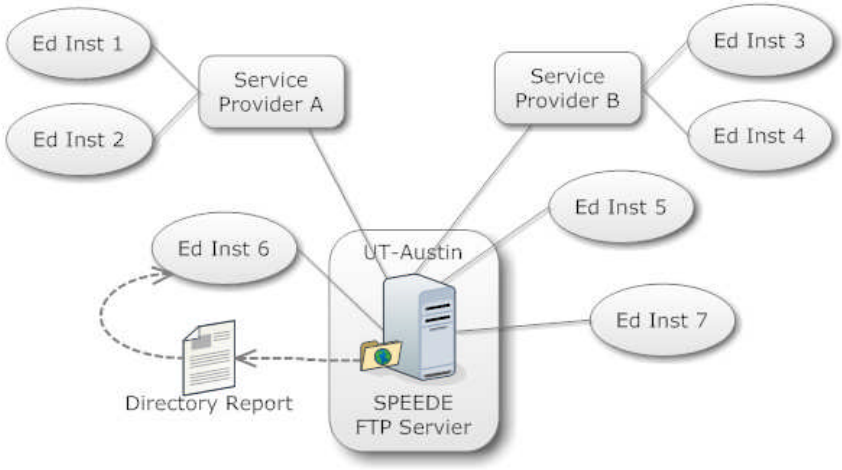
Overview

In 1995 the University of Texas-Austin established the SPEEDE server to facilitate the exchange of transcripts and has graciously maintained and operated the service at no charge since then. The SPEEDE server was designed as the central hub of a point-to-point network between individual educational institutions. Communication is handled using either SFTP or FTPS as transmission and security protocols. The published SPEEDE registrant report currently includes just under 1200 registrants.

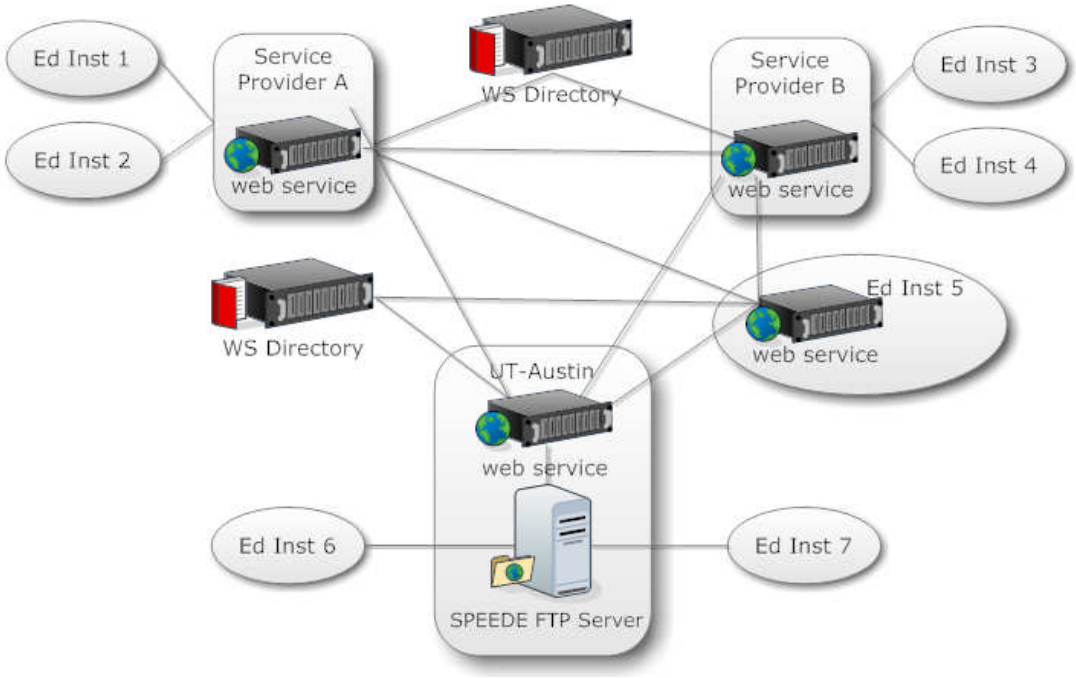
In 2011, over fifteen years since the establishment of the SPEEDE network, the technological landscape has evolved considerably. Many educational institutions utilize commercial vendors for Student Information Systems and partner with service providers for requesting, receiving or delivering transcripts. Web services standards are now available to enable automated directory lookup and efficient machine-to-machine communication in a highly secure transmission environment.

Justification for Web Services

The SPEEDE server has provided valuable and reliable service over the years but we now see issues with this design. As a central hub it provides a potential single point of failure subject not only to technical faults but also to economic insecurity in that it is supported by a single institution. By design the SPEEDE server uses a dropbox mechanism that processes transactions no faster than approximately every 20 minutes. The SFTP or FTPS security protocols utilized by the SPEEDE server are not as robust nor do they conform to the multi-layered security specified in the PESC Data Transport Standard. To address delivery to a new recipient someone at the sending host must physically look up the SPEEDE server code for the targeted institution.



The web services network will be designed to exclude a single point of failure and communicate from the sending host to the receiving host without any midstream delay. Security will be improved by the elimination of a relay host as well as by the use of the PESC Data Transport Standard. A DNS-style web services directory will make it much easier to address a transaction through the appropriate host for a given target. Tracking transactions through the SPEEDE server can be cumbersome when exchanging transcripts through third party service providers whereas a direct web services connection will streamline the tracking of transcripts. The network will be able to support any type of payload, not just transcript transactions.



Justification for Open Source

A web service developed as an open source solution would provide a common platform as the basis for value-added products and related web services (e.g. EDI/XML translation, student transcript order processing). An open source model facilitates maximum growth of the network and interoperability. (The current SPEEDE registrant list is nowhere near the theoretical limit for transcript exchange participants.) The development cycle will be relatively straightforward because it will be based on existing standards. (WSDL, DTS, EA2 and EdUnify). Furthermore BCCampus has 3-4 years experience with a web service network for transcript exchange and has indicated a willingness to assist with an open source project.

Planned Collaboration

A task force will be composed of staff from transcript service vendors, student information system vendors, educational agencies and individual educational institutions and others interested parties. The task force will coordinate the efforts of several workgroups such as for technology, business issues and funding.