**Project Scope Statement**

**Project Title:** PennWest Financial Aid Veteran’s Database

**Problem Description:**

The Financial Aid department at PennWest is overburdened with information pertaining to students that use benefits provided by the U. S. Department of Veteran’s Affairs (henceforth referred to as “the VA”), but with no real centralized way to track and update the information. Students using VA benefits have to certify monthly that they are attending full time classes and submit a benefits renewal on the VA website before the beginning of each semester. The financial aid department has to track that they have received the benefits renewal before each semester begins and if they have not received it they have to reach out to the students who are missing the renewal. There is no automated system to send out reminder emails to students that are required to certify and there is no centralized way for these students to access the amount of aid they have left.

**Anticipated Business Benefits:**

This system will alleviate some of the burden that the financial aid department experiences in the weeks leading up to each new semester and the first few weeks of each new semester by reminding students with automated communications instead of manually generated communications. This project will also alleviate stress for the students who use VA benefits because they won’t have to remember additional steps for securing their benefits each semester. With the alleviation of stress, we anticipate that the students will feel valued and important to the PennWest community and would lead to an increase in recommendations of the institution to their acquaintances or community members. This will create a positive view of PennWest as a whole while also helping the staff complete tasks more efficiently.

**System Capabilities:**

We hope to achieve this by sending reminder emails to students one month before the new semester so that they remember to certify, tracking the certifications in a concise and easily accessible way so that the financial aid staff can quickly assess who still needs to complete certifications, send out automated emails with potential resources for additional aid to any student that has exhausted the current aid, and provide a way for students to access their aid balance and any tasks that need to be completed. This system will track and monitor financial aid balances for each student.

**Risk Analysis:**

This project is very feasible. We would have to construct a database to store all of the student’s information along with an interface and options for automated or pushed out pre-drafted emails. The only issue would be with having student access to the database to monitor their information. The IT department has been reticent to allow student access to similar systems, so this may not be helpful for direct student access. As a team, we certainly have the tools and abilities to construct a database that can generate reports and support querying and searching. I also feel that we have adequate scheduling resources for completion of the project, as it is uncomplicated, and we will have three individuals working for several months.

Constraints and limitations will include the ability to host this in a way that is accessible to students. We will be limited in that we cannot directly connect to the VA’s website so that students can complete certifications directly from the PennWest website, they will still have to visit the VA’s website themselves, we will just be able to send reminders. We will also be limited to times that the financial aid office is not overburdened for collecting stakeholder information, user stories, and implementation when the time comes.