**Narrative: What educational benefits will be received by students, faculty?  What goals are going to be achieved?**

When the Graduate College was formed in fall of 2007, it was charged with university-wide oversight of graduate education. This charge required the Graduate College to implement procedures to ensure pertinent university policies are being followed by all graduate students on all of FAU’s campuses. To accomplish this, the college established a series of nine official paper-based forms for graduate students to complete their degrees: (1-3) Plan of Study (Doctoral, Master’s, and Specialist), (4) Admission to Candidacy, (5) Revision to Existing Plan of Study, (6) Request to Waive a University Regulation, (7) Academic Progression Plan, (8) Research Compliance and Safety, (9) Request to Waive SITA Training. The current paper-based submission process results in inefficiencies and frustrations that can be eliminated using the proposed web-based submission system. Of all the paper-based Plan of Study forms submitted during the past two years, 35% were either rejected or required additional staff follow-up.

The web-based forms will utilize a Centralized Security Management System (MyFAU Graduate College tab), where access to classified or sensitive information will be password-protected in accordance with MyFAU authentication. The database management system will utilize SQL server and the latest .NET technology. A central database will house all data, making possible the following: (1) action logging and approvals at each level, (2) history tracking and archiving, and (3) backup and disaster recovery. System level and academic unit level administration elements will be accessible in a centralized, easy-to-use control panel.

The web-based forms will provide numerous educational benefits to FAU. The system will: (1) make the Plan of Study a sophisticated advising tool, (2) make form tracking during the submission process efficient and transparent, and (3) increase the convenience of submitting required forms to the Graduate College for all degree-seeking graduate students. The web-based Plan of Study form will act as a sophisticated advising tool by providing on-line help to eliminate the errors that commonly occur with the paper-based system. This will improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and consistency of advisement for graduate students to follow established university policies and procedures. The use of required fields and internal controls will assure data consistency and completeness. This will reduce the amount of staff time required to verify forms both in the academic units and in the Graduate College. All web forms will be centrally located, creating a transparent tracking system. With the current paper-based system, students often become frustrated when they do not know the status of their forms during the submission process. As a result they must track down the forms to make sure they arrive in the Graduate College as expected.  Paper-based forms have often gotten “stuck” in departmental or college offices; when this happens and deadlines are missed, this has the potential consequence of preventing students from graduating. The web-based system will eliminate this problem entirely. Email reminders will prompt approvers to act in a timely manner. The status of each form can be tracked and verified by any user with given permission to view it. The entire approval routing process will take place online, enabling students, staff, and faculty members to create, view, and approve forms on campus and remotely, thus increasing both convenience and efficiency. The system will especially help our commuter and distance education students who live and work far from the Boca Raton campus. Program administrators at the academic unit level will have the flexibility to manage the approvers and adjust approval settings that are specific to their program’s needs.

Finally, this project will greatly reduce the human and physical resources that are currently needed to process the paper-based forms. With limited resources (and potentially fewer in the future), this project will position the university to handle this important aspect of graduate education in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

**How is this project aligned with the Strategic Plan? Please site specific goals and strategies.**

[**GOAL 1: Providing Increased Access to Higher Education**](http://www.fau.edu/strategicplan/goal1.php)

The Graduate College web forms project supports Goals 1 and 5 of the FAU Strategic Plan.

It is aligned with Goal 1 by contributing to “increasing the number of degrees granted to students at all levels”. The web forms will foster an institutional commitment to student satisfaction and success by making the process of submitting all forms (particularly the Plan of Study) much more convenient and efficient for all users. The current paper-based process is very labor intensive, is prone to multiple opportunities for human error, and as a result can be frustrating and cumbersome for our students. Our students today live a world in which the web is commonly used to convey important information to those who need to know and make decisions about the data provided. The web allows for input verification and accuracy, thus instantly providing for feedback when corrections are necessary. The current paper-based process is archaic in this respect.  The web-based system will assist the students in promoting timely completion of degrees by enhancing communication and the information that is needed for students to fulfill university’s policies for graduation. Students will know how they are progressing in their course of study and what remains to fulfill degree requirements. All graduate students will have access to their completed web-based forms in their MyFAU accounts for easy viewing at any time.

As outlined in Goal 5 of the Strategic Plan, the web-based form system will “represent a response to growth by offering expanded, faster and more reliable services in service and administration”. This new system will assist the Graduate College in bringing its information technology environment to a level that will meet the requirements and expectations of the faculty, staff, and graduate students of the university. Many other graduate schools across the country moved to this form of submission many years ago. Using the latest technologies in web-based programming and database management, this project will result in a huge stride forward in bringing our administrative functionality into the 21st century.

**6. Hardware Requirements:**

a. None. The current hardware resources allocated to the Graduate College are adequate to complete the project. Once the project has been completed, the expenditures required for maintenance of hardware (upgrades for servers, etc.) will come out of the Graduate College’s normal operating budget.

**b.** None. This project does not require the purchase of any additional software.

c. Project requires that the Graduate College employ a Web Application Developer responsible for every facet of the software development process including project planning, specification collection, project analysis, database design, application design, implementation, documentation, deployment, testing/debugging and maintenance.

**8. Sustainability**

After the project has been implemented, the IT professional in the Graduate College will work in cooperation with IRM to handle the maintenance and support of the system.

**9.**

N/A

**10.**

The Graduate College will implement the project. However, nominal support may be needed from IRM for the MyFAU interface and other technical issues that may arise (network administration, server configuration, database configuration, etc.).