

Sun and rSmart Kual

Open source financial system for education



Colleges and universities face a dilemma when upgrading their administrative software. Commercial Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) applications are costly to purchase, deploy, and support, and often lack features needed by educational institutions. Yet open source solutions can mean uncertain quality and support. To address this need, rSmart has joined forces with the non-profit Kual Foundation to package, certify, deploy, and support the Kual Financial System (KFS) — open source administrative software, certified to run on Sun hardware and software, that truly meets the needs of educational institutions.

Highlights

- Reduce the costs of administrative computing with an enterprise application built for education, by education
- Gain more control over innovation, upgrade cycles, costs, projects, and customization
- Integrate with existing Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) solutions for a best-of-class approach within the current environment
- Reduce the license fees and support costs of commercial ERP applications
- Support Web services through packaged, fully-supported open source software distributions optimized and certified to run on Sun hardware and software
- Receive world-class support throughout the application lifecycle to deploy Kual solutions with the highest level of confidence

Faced with growing enrollments, increased service expectations, increasing compliance requirements, and declining IT budgets, colleges and universities are replacing their aging, often home grown administrative applications, with newer systems intended to reduce costs and optimize business transactions and processes. These organizations invest substantial resources to deploy commercial ERP systems, only to find that these systems are more costly to maintain, and still lack the unique features needed by higher education.

These institutions want more control over innovation, customization, deployment projects, and upgrade cycles, as well as control over their costs. General-purpose ERP systems often lack the features and flexibility required to adapt to the specific needs of higher education, especially for financial modules. This can mean costly customization efforts as well as upgrade and support issues. Further, the license fees and support costs of these systems can be significant. However, the alternative of home grown or open source solutions also has risks — many organizations do not have the resources to take on the development and maintenance tasks, and open source solutions typically offer little ongoing support.

The Kual Financial System

The non-profit Kual Foundation was formed as a collaboration of colleges, universities and other interested parties to develop a suite of open source applications tailored to the specific needs of Carnegie class educational institutions. The Kual Financial system is the first of several modules, built around a common infrastructure to ensure seamless integration, that will enable colleges and universities to migrate away from propriety legacy applications to a modular, open, best-of-class solution.

Developed for education by education

KFS is based on Indiana University's existing, well-proven Financial Information System. The Indiana University system's design conforms to financial reporting system and financial accounting system practices used by more than 500 colleges and universities worldwide. For example, the principles of fund accounting are a core component of the Kual software, precluding the need for major modifications during implementation. KFS meets the needs of small campuses with modest financial reporting requirements as well as the handling the complexities of large multicampus universities.

A best-of-class solution

KFS is built with a service-oriented architecture (SOA), enabling it to integrate with existing ERP solutions such as Oracle, Peoplesoft, SunGard Higher Education Banner, SAP, etc. for a best-of-class approach. Going forward, institutions can then deploy additional Kuali solutions as they become available.

Experienced support for Kuali from rSmart

rSmart is the leading open source application software company serving the education market. rSmart was involved in establishing the Kuali community and is the only commercial partner with a seat on the Kuali board. rSmart provides strong collaborative leadership within the Kuali community, and has demonstrated expertise with Kuali software. rSmart's subscription support model allows institutions to take advantage of world-class support while managing and reducing their costs.

rSmart and Sun deliver reliable, robust solutions

KFS is a mission-critical application for which the risk of downtime must be minimized. rSmart partners with Sun (also a Kuali Commercial Affiliate) to certify, deploy, and support the KFS software running on Sun hardware and software.

KFS is certified and optimized to run on Sun hardware under the Solaris™ Operating System with Sun-sponsored open source software including the MySQL™ database, GlassFish™ application server, OpenSSO, and the Open Enterprise Service Bus (Open ESB). By taking advantage of virtualization, KFS can consolidate financial solutions and improve system utilization.

Sun is a market leader in administrative computing infrastructure solutions, and has a proven record of success building open, secure, scalable, and highly available campus infrastructures. Sun products and services provide a solid infrastructure which is easy to manage with low total cost of ownership (TCO) and high availability, giving university and college administrators greater value for their increasingly limited budgets. Sun's systems come in a wide variety of configurations that can meet the needs of institutions of all sizes, from small campuses to large multicampus universities.

rSmart, as the adoption enabler, makes possible rapid and cost-effective deployment while reducing the uncertainties associated with open source applications. Institutions can receive world-class support throughout the application lifecycle as they deploy, integrate, and expand their Kuali Financial System. As a result, colleges and universities gain the benefits of open solutions with enterprise grade support and the expertise of rSmart and Sun behind them, and can have full confidence in the KFS solution's ability to handle enterprise computing demands with ease.

Significant savings for a private university

One of the early adopters of the Kuali software, a private university specializing in business curricula, realized significant cost savings (less than half that of a name-brand solution) in implementing an online system for its core financial processes. Because the features needed for educational accounting were already built in, deployment was greatly simplified.

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The reliance on open source software also means that additional features can be developed and updated by local developers. The university expects to upgrade to a full ERP suite in the future based on other open source software in development from the Kuali Foundation.

Sun and rSmart Kuali

Together, rSmart and Sun can offer educational institutions a path for replacing their proprietary or home grown ERP systems with world class solutions based on open platforms that are designed by education for education. Combining an open application with an open operating system and open middleware creates a flexible and robust solution that provides the benefits of more rapid innovation, better support, and no vendor lock-in.

rSmart's KFS system provides the education market with a packaged and supported Kuali software distribution running on Sun hardware and software, which will allow educational institutions to reduce the costs of administrative computing while deploying the Kuali software with the highest levels of confidence, knowing that they have the support and expertise of Sun and rSmart behind them.



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