Comparing Apples to Apples or Are They Oranges?

Comparing New Admission Systems and Their Implementation

Gillian Robinson
Senior Director, Strategic Operations – University of Calgary

Mark Quinsey
Admission Systems Manager – McGill University

Apples and Oranges

- Two research intensive universities

- Geographically different

- Different starting points with the same goal, a new way to process graduate admissions

- How does the implementation of these systems and the systems themselves compare?

Graduate Studies @ McGill

- 89 teaching departments that offer over 300 programs
- Approx. 9000 enrolled graduate students (37000 overall)
- Approx. 15000 admissions applications to graduate studies per year
  - 50% are international applications
    - USA, China, Iran, India are our top feeder countries
  - 75% at the Masters level / 25% PhD Level
  - Approx. 4000 offers of admission made each year (49% Masters, 51% PhD)
  - Approx. 2500 newly enrolled graduate students each year

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Graduate Studies @ McGill Cont'd

- Semi decentralized admissions model
  - Final admissions decisions made by both the graduate departments and central admissions
    - This model was introduced with the launch of the uApply admissions system
- Responsibility for graduate admissions was transferred to Enrolment Services from Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies prior to the launch of uApply

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Why a new admissions system?

- Graduate admission process was <u>almost</u> completely paper based
- Surveys and focus groups were done with graduate applicants who had received an offer of admission
  - Of those who did not accept our offer 30% cited the delay in receiving the offer of admission as the reason
  - Many applicants have accepted offers from other institutions by the time they receive notification of their acceptance to McGill.
  - Those who did accept our offer expressed frustration with a slow, confusing and outdated process
- The need to recruit and *enrol more (particularly research-focused) Graduate students* had been identified as a priority for the University in the Provost's White Paper publish prior to the start of the project

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Development of the System

- The development of uApply was contracted to an external company
  - Two of our internal developers were co-located with the company to help develop the system and for knowledge transfer
- Internal development also took place to integrate all the systems into one solution
  - Coordinated work between multiple IT Services areas
  - Coordinated within the McGill Project Management Office

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Expected Benefits

- Faster processing time for applications from submission to decision
- Improving the quality and quantity of information available to decision makers
- More transparent straight forward process for the applicants
- Reduction of paper usage

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Key Features of uApply

- A single source of information
- Almost a complete elimination of paper handling with the departments
- Electronic submission and processing of applicant documents and reference letters
- An automated decision process for a large portion of the applicant pool
- Academic units are able to customize the application form to suit the needs of their programs
- The form and process are greatly simplified for applicants
- A built-in communications module makes it easier for departments to interact with applicants

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Change Management

▶ Community involvement is key
- Faculty and staff input during the design phase
- Community based experts and cheerleaders during rollout

▶ Training! Training! Training!
- Regularly scheduled structured training sessions
- Drop in labs for staff to get help with real issues

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Community Support

- uApply Support Team was launched at the same time as the new system
  - Made up of volunteers from 10 graduate departments and central Enrolment Services staff
  - Volunteers received additional training
  - Department staff responded to calls/emails from other departments in their own faculties
  - Central Enrolment Services staff support the volunteers as well as the community at large

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In case you're not sure…

Calgary, Alberta, Canada

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

6000 grad students

- ➤ 55% Research: 30% Doctoral 25% Masters
- ➤ 45% Professional: 36% Masters
- ■ 23% International from 96 countries
  - — China, Iran and India predominate

In 2013

- ■ Over 300 PhDs graduated
- ■ Average ttc for PhD = 4.8 years (2013 U15 data on 2002 cohort)

Before 2009, FGS

- Received all admission files from programs as "recommendations"
- Checked all GPAs and documents
- Issued admission letter
- Maintained files

- In 2009
- FGS Delegated admission to programs
- ✓ Meet minimum requirements
- ✓ All documents collected
- ✓ Maintained files

- **FGS focusses on**
  — Low GPA admissions

  — Exceptions e.g. Cotutelle

  — Advice on GPA interpretation

  — Training on international transcripts

  — Regular audit of admissions

  — Improvement of the online application

  — Advising to programs on best use of application

- Legacy application system changed to development of online application integrated with the student system – Peoplesoft – and the Student Centre
  - Managed in house through IT developers
  - Developed as comprehensive admission system for the University
  - Flexible, able to house individual program requirements

- End to end online process for application, documents, evaluation, admission and communication

Why?

- Old system 3rd party and outdated
- Reduce chance of errors
- Opportunity of Peoplesoft
- Increase speed of decision making
- Mandate from University strategic plan – Eyes High – to increase graduate (research) enrolment

- Improve the lives of people – applicant, staff and faculty - involved…..

Threats to success:
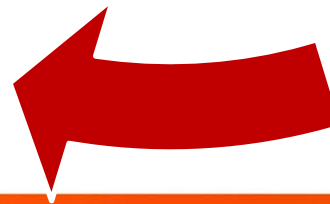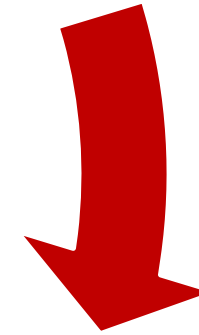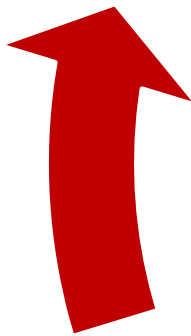
- Loss of expertise
- Fear of failure
- Lack of the right information
- Lack of the right support
- Lack of time
- Failure to meet program needs
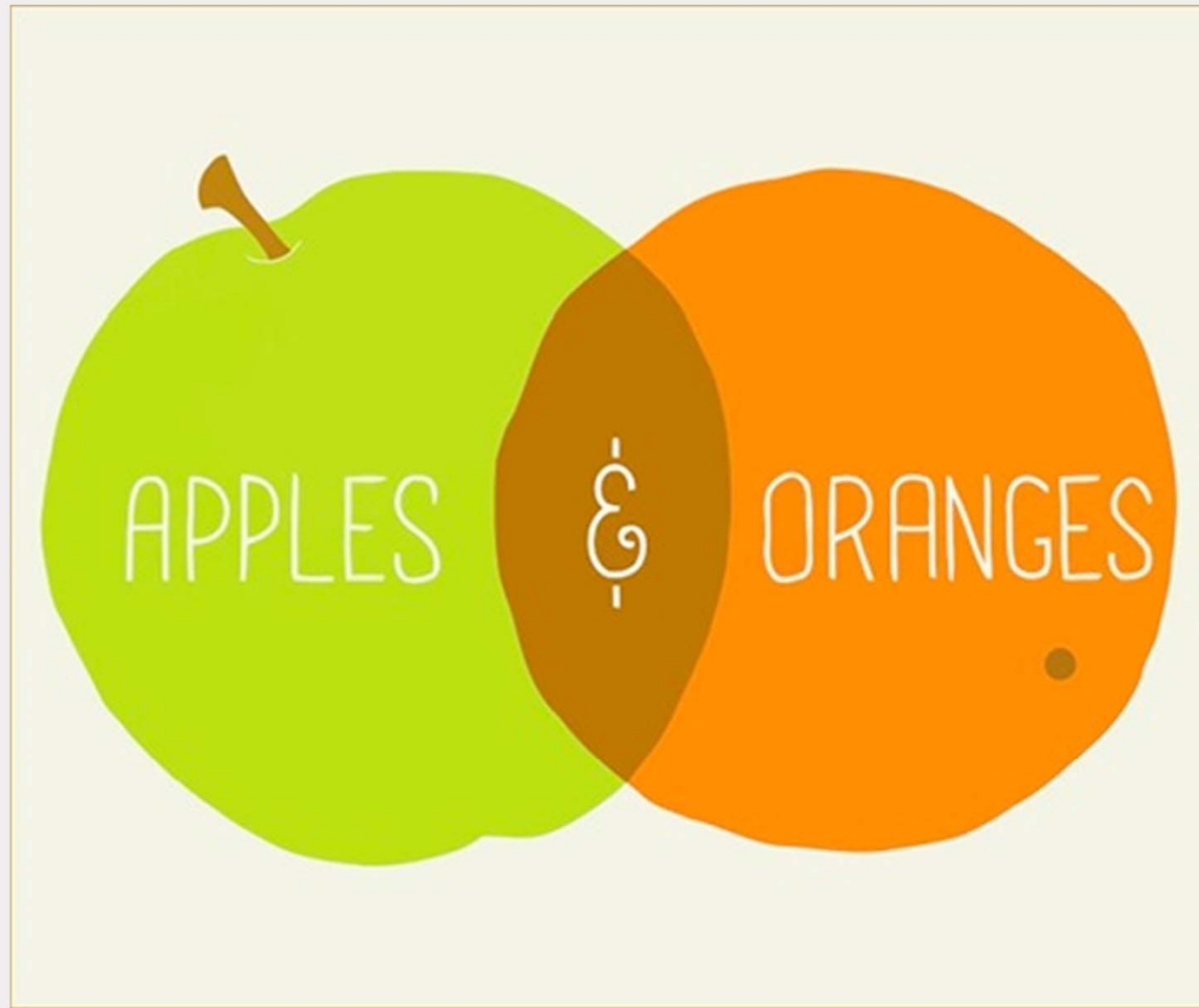
From the beginning:

- ✓ Consult broadly
- ✓ Small group training
- ✓ In person program set up
- ✓ Use "cheerleaders"
- ✓ Listen
- ✓ Make improvements
- ✓ Remember the academics!

Questions?