

## Unisa chooses Idu-Concept for budget planning

### UNISA - a case study

Managing a large organisation is a challenging task – and when budget control in a multibillion-rand entity is devolved to the departmental level, close control and the ability to consolidate budgets across the organisation is critical for effective pecuniary control. Recognising the requirement for an effective technology tool to help it manage its finances more accurately, the University of South Africa (Unisa) called on Synergy Computing to supply, implement and support the Idu-Concept Software suite of budgeting and forecasting tools.

With the spate of mergers taking place between higher-education institutions in South Africa, additional pressures have been applied on organisations seeking to manage their affairs under appropriate corporate governance guidelines. One such organisation is the University of South Africa; it has recently merged with Technikon South Africa and Vista University Distance Education Campus to become Africa's largest distance-education provider. Post-merger, the new comprehensive institution has over 200 000 students, assets exceeding R2 billion and an annual budget of R1.8 billion, giving it the status of a mega-university of global significance.

According to [Willem du Plessis](#), Director: (Budgets) Department of Finance at Unisa, the merger of previously independent organisations has deeper implications. "One of these implications was that budgeting was in a bit of a muddle. On consultation with our Executive Director for Finance, [Nkuli Swana](#), and in discussions with Synergy Computing, we opted for the idu-Concept toolset. This provided us with a cost-effective tool to monitor internal costs; the toolset was attractive as it allowed budgeting to be broken down into various portfolios and colleges, and links into the HR administration and financial management packages," he says. Noting that the administration of a large educational institution like Unisa is considerably complicated, with student intakes, human resources, fee collection, government subsidy collection and many more factors that must be managed, Du Plessis says idu-Concept both delivered the required flexibility and the ability to integrate into its financial and HR systems.





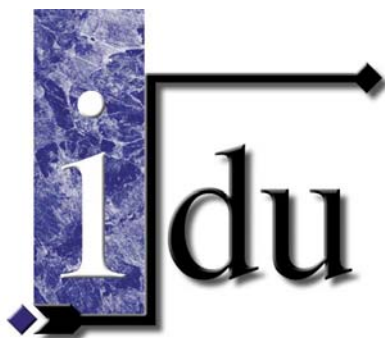
Furthermore, as a locally developed product, he says it was reassuring to know that any custom requirements would not present a problem since the development team is located in Cape Town.

"With the identification of this solution, we embarked on a business analysis and accepted a proposal from Synergy; early successes with Idu-Concept demonstrated a clear value proposition in terms of the ability to easily budget and forecast, and in three months the initial project scope was increased by 50% as more user licences were purchased to extend Idu-Concept further into the university," he says. Not only has the Idu-Concept software helped Unisa to better manage budgeting and forecasting, it has also assisted the giant organisation to improve the management of HR and even reduce fraud. "Problems with headcount have been identified and resolved, while it is easier to ensure employees are on the appropriate grades and salary scales - the cost centre/portfolio managers have been equipped with an easy-to-use Microsoft-based tool that enables them to better manage their departments," he says.

Furthermore, Du Plessis says the powerful operational reporting features of the Idu-Concept solution provide rapid insight into budgets and deliver the clarity necessary to manage complex financial statements.

To date, Synergy Computing has rolled out the Idu-Concept product suite to 180 users at Unisa. Du Plessis says the potential demonstrated by the product has led the organisation to eye the ambitious goal of breaking down the total cost to the organisation of every single staff member, allowing it to more accurately map cost versus benefit of each human resource.

"Idu-Concept has proven to be a powerful tool for improved management in line with the university's commitment to the principles of good governance. With the support of Synergy Computing, we anticipate using these tools to deliver world-class financial management that is in the interests of staff, students and shareholders," he concludes.



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