

CSUSB Undergraduate Studies: Learning Center
GENERAL TIPS FOR DATABASE DESIGN & IMPROVEMENT
(draft by C. Linton, LC Director)

Use a database software application that is well-known, widely-used, well-supported and acceptable to those in the university as a whole.

Keep hard copies of data to back-up and check information entered by students. Periodically have a data-entry person enter the data and run checks.

Include a note at the bottom of every report generated with the following information:

- Person who generated the report
- Date the report was generated
- Tables used to generate the report
- Why the report was generated (e.g. - Who requested it, How was it used, etc.)

Try to plan in advance which reports and data will be needed so the programmer does not have to constantly re-program and refine the reports. Review the following:

- What type of data is currently collected and how is it used?
- What type of data may be asked for in the future?
- What type of reports would best profile our services?
- Design a timeline to generate reports regularly — especially if info is needed from others

Use consistent field names throughout the database system.

Use field names consistent with university and division names.

Use field names and file names in DOS format (8 characters, etc.).

Document the database by keeping a master notebook of all data elements, values, etc. that key staff can access.

Keep a log of which reports are generated, why, when and how.

Use graphics (PICT?) vs. a font logos so all computers can read them.

Budget items to consider:

- Programmer (to design the system, modify the system, generate reports and provide on-going support)
- Software (multiple copies and continuous upgrades)
- Equipment (computers, palettes, wands, etc.)
- Additional manuals to augment documentation provided with software
- Training for selected staff (other than the programmer)
- Data-entry staff