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Winthrop Awarded 2014 Innovation Award for Creation of Duplicate Records Software

Winthrop University

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Winthrop Awarded 2014 Innovation Award for Creation of Duplicate Records Software

Quick Facts

- The South Carolina Information Technology Directors Association named Winthrop University as the recipient of its 2014 Innovation Award.
- The award focuses on a Duplicate Record Mitigation system that Jonathan Thomas designed and implemented for use with the university's Banner system, one of the most widely used enterprise resource planning systems in higher education.



Jonathan Thomas

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – **Winthrop University Senior Analyst Jonathan Thomas** led a technology team that has won recognition for creating software to find and correct errors in its duplicate institutional records.

Their efforts led the [South Carolina Information Technology Directors Association](#) to name the Winthrop team on Sept. 9 as the recipient of the **2014 Innovation Award**. Accepting the award in Columbia were **Thomas; James Hammond**, associate vice president for information technology, and **Warren Byrd**, director of administrative programs and systems.

The award focuses on a **Duplicate Record Mitigation system** that Thomas designed and implemented for use with the university's Banner system, one of the most widely used enterprise resource planning systems in higher education.

"This project has vastly improved data integrity for the biographical data stored in Winthrop's Banner system," said Hammond. "University officials now have a high level of confidence that any duplicates in the system that could be identified with common matching rules have actually been resolved. Winthrop is very proud of this mitigation system and believes this new technology positions the university at the cutting edge of duplicate mitigation compared to peer institutions running Banner."

All higher education institutions worry about **data integrity** because of the existence of **duplicate biographical records**. Hammond said contamination occurs for several reasons, including human error in entering data, name changes that have not been reported, inaccurate data from outside sources or incomplete data.

Problems occur because **Banner** does not provide a mechanism to continue checking for duplicates on an ongoing basis, nor does it provide the ability to flag a record pair as distinct. Without this capability, a data integrity specialist would not have the tools to avoid re-evaluating the same record pairs over and over again.

Hammond said that Thomas took the results of a casual conversation about duplicate problems and turned the conversation into a **realistic project**. He designed the scope, the functionality, and flow of the system and performed all of the coding and testing.

Some of Thomas' solutions involved:

- 1) Designing an ad hoc capability to run selected duplicate identification criteria against the entire database. This would be used by a data integrity specialist on demand.
- 2) Designing a scheduled capability that can run multiple times per day to “catch” new duplicate suspects quickly. Running two or three times per day would provide sufficient notice before duplicate records accrue enough transactions to cause significant problems.
- 3) Tagging suspect duplicates that are determined to be uniquely different to avoid re-evaluating the same records repeatedly.
- 4) Adding functionality to facilitate the deletion process for superfluous records.

“This work Jonathan performed is innovative in that it addresses a serious data integrity problem that is not solved by existing solutions in the higher education Banner market,” Hammond said.

For more information, contact **Judy Longshaw**, news and media services manager, at longshawj@winthrop.edu or by calling her at 803/323-2404.

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