

Operations

Background

Over the past two decades, the ways in which administrative units, such as Business & Administrative Services, Enrollment Management, Information Technology Services, and the Planning and Budget Offices, have supported the campus mission have evolved. Until about 1995, most business processes were paper-driven and manual. The Financial Information System introduced automated processing, and key financial and human resource processes were decentralized to 26 Service Centers.

In the year 2000, "UC2010: A New Business Architecture for the University of California" (<http://uc2010.ucsd.edu/>), outlined a UC-wide strategy to better manage growth, controls costs, and implement best business practices. Five years later, separate Business and Information Technology Transformation Programs were implemented, centralizing many financial, human resource, and information technology functions. And, enabling technologies, like CruzBuy e-Procurement and CruzPay electronic time and attendance, were implemented to improve efficiency. A cohesive effort to develop the campus's data warehouse resulted in the creation of a robust decision support system that provides easy and timely access to information that supports the needs of a wide range of campus users. Many administrative units continue to implement new or improved technologies and to simplify processes to further improve effectiveness and efficiency.

Lessons Learned

Past efforts to optimize administrative services have provided a roadmap of sorts, useful in undertaking strategic efforts. Some important lessons learned from these efforts include:

- **CULTURE.** In general, the campus culture values consensus and tradition, oftentimes making it difficult to reach the critical mass of support needed to transform processes and standards.
- **RISK-TAKING.** Many campus practices intentionally and unintentionally prioritize risk avoidance, at the cost of missing significant opportunities to improve efficiency and better manage costs.
- **STANDARDIZATION.** Many business processes allow for flexibility to accommodate varied needs, sacrificing administrative nimbleness and adaptability in exchange.

- **STAFF COMPETENCY.** Successfully implementing change requires staff comfortable with it and able to adapt their knowledge and skills to new approaches and technologies.
- **TECHNOLOGY.** Improved efficiency and cost management from implementing enabling technology, like the Financial Information System, can take many years to materialize. Success requires strategic planning, communications, expectations management, and patience.
- **PERFORMANCE MONITORING.** Successfully achieving strategic objectives requires establishing and achieving relevant, specific, and measurable performance goals.
- **RESOURCING AND MAINTENANCE.** Adequately staff and equip campus activities to assure long-term viability. Failure to do so will cost more in the long run.
- **CENTRALIZED VS DISTRIBUTED.** Consolidation/centralization of activities tends to avoid rather than reduce costs.
- **DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY.** Decisions should be made at the lowest possible level, closest to the work and should not be burdened by layers of approvals.

National Trends/External Picture

University and campus administrative structures and processes are highly influenced by a variety of UC-dictated policies and practices, covering everything from handling anatomical donations to student housing funding, and by standards and guidelines established by external governing bodies, like the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) and EDUCAUSE, the national higher education information technology professional association. Prominent among current trends, and the UC/UCSC approach to them are the following:

- **ENABLING TECHNOLOGY.** UC is pursuing strategies to implement enabling technology and consolidate staff resources to streamline business processes and more cost-effectively deliver services to all UC locations. The UCPATH human resource and payroll project (<http://ucpath.universityofcalifornia.edu/>), currently underway, is a good example of this.
- **HOSTED CLOUD-BASED INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS.** More IT-enabled, third-party managed business services and “cloud-based” systems, like the UCSC Recruitment Management System, are being cost-effectively deployed across different UC locations.
- **ADMINISTRATIVE SIMPLIFICATION.** The University continues to pursue business process simplification through efforts like the UC Working Smarter Initiatives. (<http://workingsmarter.universityofcalifornia.edu/>).

- **MOBILITY.** Bring your own device (BYOD) is a growing trend that will drive the way UC/UCSC offers access to systems and tools to the workforce and students alike. UCSC is currently working on developing platform-agnostic applications and tools for easier access to institutional information.

Key Operational Questions

In considering the drive to operate as efficiently as possible, the following key operational questions may help to frame the way we approach future state operations, in particular when creating or redesigning a program or procedure.

ARE WE BORROWING TROUBLE?

Does our anticipation of possible future problems paralyze us?

Do some community members resist because they believe that success would ultimately lead to a loss of jobs or resources?

Is our adherence to regulation stricter than it need be—are we in effect creating our own work stoppage?

ARE WE AT RISK OF FAILURE DUE TO INSUFFICIENT RESOURCES (PEOPLE, FUNDS, TECHNOLOGY)?

Does our unwillingness to pay startup costs ultimately cost us more?

Does our definition of talent prevent our getting talented people?

After the program or procedure is launched, is someone responsible for maintaining or supporting it?

SHOULD A PROCESS IDEALLY BE DONE CENTRALLY, BUT FACES RESISTANCE TO CENTRALIZATION?

Does the distributed process require redundant effort?

Does the lack of central vision allow so many solutions to proliferate that much effort is wasted and frustration is caused?

Would community members be more likely to make use of centralized services and expertise with better communication about availability or is this the sort of problem that community members are much less likely to make use of if they can't address the issue locally?

SHOULD THE PROCESS OR PROGRAM BE LEFT TO INDIVIDUAL DECISION BY DIVISIONS OR DEPARTMENTS?

Would a service provided by central be unacceptable to some because of funding or accreditation demands?

Would the existence of a central process prevent innovation?

ARE WE REINVENTING THE WHEEL?

How much of a divergence from publicly available solutions or tools needs to exist to justify reinvention?

Would keeping people from “inventing the wheel” retard innovation?

Are we reinventing because the last solution was not maintained or lost a champion?

DOES A SOLUTION REQUIRE SO MANY PEOPLE OR LEVELS OF APPROVAL THAT DECISIONS ARE DELAYED OR IMPOSSIBLE?

None of us are as dumb as all of us.

Are the people involved in the solution the right people with the right background?

Are we making it so clear that it is better to receive forgiveness than permission that the best solutions are created “off the grid” by a small team of enthusiasts?

DO OUR PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES ADD ADDITIONAL STEPS OR REQUIREMENTS BEYOND UC POLICY?

Apropos of the old saying time is money, have we considered the value of our time and the additional cost and confusion imposed by these extra steps?

Proposed Operating Principles

This strategic planning process presents UC Santa Cruz with a tremendous opportunity to frame our future. In the operating principles that follow, we suggest practical, realistic and achievable ways to work more effectively in supporting our core mission and values.

PROCESS-RELATED

- Apply a generous dose of common sense to every procedure or process. When the letter of the law violates the spirit, look for a way to offer flexibility.
 - Example: The steps of a process, such as entertainment reimbursement, need to be continually assessed to identify and eliminate non-value-added steps/requirements/approvals that go beyond UC or UCSC policy.
- Keep processes as simple as possible, but no simpler.
 - Example: Processes, for example, the lack of automated account activation for prospective students, not because of policy but because of their manual and/or onerous nature, are prime candidates for simplification.
- Build in ‘durable’ support for all complex, high-impact issues. Since people and their roles will change, an initial voice/supporter/champion is likely to be replaced by a new champion at some point.

- Example: Focus on UCSC Undergraduate Student Success is supported by the establishment of a team to work with the special assistant in this area to assure continued focus.

DECISION-RELATED

- Operate under decision-making principles and taxonomy for general application and persistence over time.
 - Example: Clarify parameters for delegations of authority.
- Establish a balance between proceeding at will or with approval.
 - Example: Consider post-audit as an appropriate control in low risk situations.
- Intentionally make decisions on core issues.
 - Example: Pursue process improvement opportunities in areas like human resources, travel, and procurement that are complicated, but will yield great benefits for the campus.
- Small groups of smart people should be able to make smart decisions.
 - Example: Engage customers of campus services as key contributors to the solution process.
- Reward success and innovation.
 - Example: Simplification efforts must include positive reinforcement, through programs such as staff recognition awards to those making notable contributions.

EFFICIENCY-RELATED

- Fully automate automated processes and not merely let them masquerade as automated.
 - Example: Staff performance appraisal forms filled in online, printed out and sent back in hard copy for processing.
- Establish a balance between nostalgia and innovation that allows for the embodiment of core values.
 - Example: Example: Act like a powerful, highly regarded research institution.
- If the collective cost of not fixing something for a small number of years exceeds the cost of fixing it, it should be fixed.
 - Example: Pursue automated solutions that provide significant long-term campus benefits over lower cost, lower overall benefit alternatives.

Potential Short- or Long-Term Plans

Outline what needs to be done in the next year, which significant changes can be anticipated, and what investments will need to be made over the next several years.

- Create a decision-making taxonomy including level and locus of decision.
- Create a well-publicized method of getting people to the right person or place to get things done (such as a super-queue or an interactive website that narrows answers based on provided input).
- Inventory existing policies and processes that may benefit from improved efficiency or simplicity.
- Identify hybrid automated processes and figure out a way to fully automate them.
- Identify inefficiencies and pain points and determine what can be done to help employees get their work done more efficiently.
- Intentionally look for ways to improve morale and practice the UCSC principles of community.

Conclusion

We have an opportunity to change some of our processes and procedures to make UCSC a better workplace and school. We hope that some of these questions and principles can provide yardsticks for improvement.