

## Department and Business Office Efficiency Team

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The Department and Business Office Efficiency Team was asked to develop options for more efficient and effective delivery of support services to all CoF programs regardless of administrative structure along with short and long-term implications. To accomplish this charge, we were to identify first a common set of services that departments provide to faculty, staff, students, and administrators; then, services provided by the Business Office; and finally, identify those services that might be centralized or improved through process or technology enhancements.

This document represents the Task Group's initial thinking. Once any changes to the college structure have been identified, we can look at other centralization options and staffing realignment.

### **Common services provided by Departmental and Business Office staff.**

**Please Note: This is not a comprehensive list of services currently provided by the Departments or Business Office. Only common services have been included. Office manager functions and interactions have not been included.**

<b>Accounting</b>	Ordering supplies/purchasing (done through Glenn Folkert); submission of paperwork/forms to the foundation as necessary for fellowship/scholarship distribution, reimbursements, deposits; process travel reimbursements
<b>Department reports, records, &amp; documentation</b>	Accreditation reports (eg. ABET), P&T, prof reviews, vacation/leave records, reports, proposal documents, newsletters, DH calendars, academic staffing, curriculum proposals, catalog updates, travel coordination
<b>Facilities</b>	Room scheduling for classes, room scheduling for meetings, key management for Peavy/Richardson Hall, key check out for College Forests, room/desk assignment for graduate students, etc.
<b>Office support</b>	Reception, phones, supervise student workers, office manuals, filing, student and temporary timesheets, labor distribution records, safety coordination, mail, photocopying, personnel hiring coordination, recruiting support, promotional materials, advising support
<b>Meetings &amp; Events</b>	Scheduling meetings, committees, conferences, special collections/facilities/presentations

<b>Department Publications</b>	Technical manuscript preparation, proceedings, external newsletters, graphics, announcements, brochures, presentations, posters, dept. displays, misc. word processing
<b>Web work</b>	Blackboard postings, dept. and event web sites, faculty web pages, etc.
<b>Graduate students</b>	Applications, advising assistance, curriculum communications, BANNER/SIS Data Warehouse (accessing applicant information, enrollment of graduate students, transcripts, overrides, etc.) student acceptance letters, GRA appointments maintenance, Graduate student handbook maintenance.
<b>Undergraduate students</b>	Advising assistance, scholarships, audits, curriculum communications, BANNER/SIS Data Warehouse (accessing student enrollment, transcripts, overrides, etc)
<b>Instructional Support</b>	Dept. Liaison with eCampus, teaching materials development, scheduling SET, copying, word processing, correspondence.
<b>Department Computer support</b>	On-line services, minor trouble-shooting, liaison with Help Desk, file conversions, backups, printing

**In developing suggestions for more efficient and effective delivery of support the following criteria were considered:**

- Evaluate the cost of the change
- Program needs:
  - Time spent trying to locate the person to do the task
  - Time spent to locate necessary information
- Technology required for current task, future technology to make task simpler, easier, less duplication
- Duplication of effort
- Communication, or how better communication could enhance task
  - Consider how public relations/communication might assist the task, such as forms on the Business Office web site that are not widely known or used
- Who has control over the task—OSU mandated vs. College or departmentally mandated tasks
- Necessity of Forestry representation at the University level for mandated tasks.
- Training or skills needed to do the task

The deliveries of common support services to the academic programs by the departments and the Business Office were discussed in two two-hour meetings of this team. Support for academic programs was found to be largely a classified activity with professional faculty involvement in graduate programs limited.

### **Suggestions or potential measures that would improve efficiency and effectiveness:**

- Create an electronic database for undergraduate data linkable to Banner or Data Warehouse to help automatically update student files. This would assist with posting grades and keeping student files current, reducing the time staff currently spends on these processes. There may have to be some modification for majors. Changes to this process may save several days each term. (high cost to implement)
- Standardize the graduate application process within the departments. (low cost to implement)
- Eliminate unnecessary forms and streamline processes.
  - The Request for Airfare forms is one that could be eliminated by having the Business Office travel accounting technician forward the itinerary received from the travel agent to the department for approval. This would avoid duplication of effort and increase awareness of faculty schedules. (low cost to implement)
  - TRES—Travel reimbursement documents would be completed by traveler rather than department staff. (low cost to implement)
  - Provide more web based forms and additional automation to existing web based forms. (medium cost to implement)
    - An example would be the current invoice form. Once completed it would go electronically to the Business Office accounts receivable person in the invoice format so the individual would only have to do minor modifications, if any, before sending it out for collection.
  - Reorganize form access on the CoF Business Office website so forms are easier to find and use. (low cost to implement)
  - Have a system that accepts electronic signatures for designated forms. (low cost to implement)
  - Shift responsibility to unclassified staff to fill out and submit their own forms for time and attendance—reminder to be sent out and each person is responsible for submitting their own forms. (low cost to implement)
- Establish unique Email boxes specifically for centralized JV, salary redistribution and travel to eliminate work duplication in the Business Office. (low cost to implement)
- Centralize classroom scheduling. (low to medium cost to implement)
- Have more copiers with hole-punch capability. Saves time and is ergonomically better than manual hole-punching. (medium cost to implement)
- Prof reviews and P&T
  - Have the faculty web pages be the source of vita and use it for prof reviews. (web based cv) This could also be the source for a CoF publications database, rather than staff manually entering publication data from prof reviews. (high cost to implement)
  - Go to a 3-year review for tenured faculty but require a review for faculty in the year of their P&T. (low cost to implement)
  - Request P&T within the College to end one week prior to Academic Affairs deadline, thus giving departments one complete week to prepare final dossier. Department representatives and the College P&T committee would need to agree to this change in procedure. (low cost to implement)
- Not authorize overtime for any work, procedure or project. (low cost to implement)
- Have task/desk manuals for all positions. (low to medium cost to implement)

- Grant/Research Support
  - Scan grants and have them available for viewing by the PIs, Office Managers, the Business Office, and others associated with the grant process. (medium cost to implement)
  - Split grants management between two people in the Business Office for better communication and efficiency.
  - Hold Joint Venture Agreement and National Science Foundation workshops for faculty. Have samples of budgets, proposal, etc. on web for faculty to use as an additional resource. Providing faculty with the necessary tools for submitting proposals and reduce the time spent by staff assisting in the grant process. (low cost to implement)
- Depending on the final college structure, we may want to rethink the Business Office and Department Office configuration. Possibilities such as moving accounting techs to Department Offices or having departments assigned to accounting techs in the Business Office could increase efficiency. (medium cost to implement)
- Meetings
  - Each like task group from the departments meet monthly or quarterly to discuss procedures, problems, and ways to become more efficient. (low cost to implement)
  - Business Office and Office Managers meet monthly or quarterly for better communication
  - Rethink frequency and purpose of meetings. While meetings can be a good use of time for decision making, they can decrease effectiveness and efficiency by reducing the time staff has available to complete their work. (low cost to implement)
- Publications/Communications office
  - Use for technical manuscript prep, proceedings, external newsletters, graphics, announcements, brochures, presentations, posters, Dept. displays, misc. word processing. (low cost to implement)
  - Web updates—minor updates would be done at the department level, major revisions and web page creation would be submitted to the Publications/Communications office. (low to medium cost to implement)
- Rethink faculty—vs—support staff time devoted to ‘community’ College committees (Food Drive, Building Community, etc.). The Food Drive takes a huge commitment of time from CoF employees to pull together, and historically this commitment has mostly come from support staff. Should events be dropped? (low cost to implement)
- Have Outlook workshop for more efficient use of Outlook software. The workshop could provide instruction on better utilization of Outlook tools available such as email management, calendar, tasks, journal, and contacts. (low cost to implement)
- Develop an efficiency committee to continue the “think tank” type conversations surrounding college processes, forms and requirements. (low cost to implement)

The pros to the suggestions are increased in efficiency, more effective delivery of support, elimination of duplication, and reduced cost of support.

The cons to the suggestions listed are the unknown cost of implementation and time. Some types of service would be changed. One of the costs of reducing staff support is an increased cost to faculty and reduction of their productivity. If the college decides to implement the reductions, then it is up to the Dean and College Administration to support implementation of changes.

Given that distribution of duties is different and carried out by positions at different levels in each department, actual FTE savings are difficult to define.