

Report of the Findings of the Budget Council Ad-Hoc Committee

April 11, 2008

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Since we were first convened on March 3, 2008 by Dr. Ashok Dhingra, we have met regularly to discuss, explore, and finally report our findings in relationship to our charge:

Review various financial and administrative practices at unit, divisional and institution levels with respect to efficiency while maintaining effectiveness and strengthening revenues and enrollment. We were asked to include all administrative, academic, student affairs and other entities at the institution, and our recommendations should result in permanent savings effective July 1, 2008.

We began our work with each unit representative reviewing five specific areas: 1) Travel, 2) Purchasing, 3) Human Resources, 4) Budgets, and 5) Marketing & Communication. The unit reports provided to the committee were educational and comprehensive. Each member of the committee found the experience to be quite informative. It provided a clearer understanding of the complexity of each unit's workloads and how they are currently distributed among their respective support staff. A finding of concern to the entire committee was the lack of separation of duties in several units. We recommend that each unit review their internal processes to ensure these practices are corrected to ensure fidelity with university guidelines.

Below is a summary of our findings:

1) Travel and Purchasing. We found that numerous staff members in each unit have some responsibility for travel (requests and reimbursement processing). We agreed that this is not an efficient use of time, nor does it result in timely reimbursements to travelers. To be effective travel processors, there is a need for expertise/specialization.

2) Purchasing was similar in that many staff members perform these functions in each of the units. In some areas this is an arduous task, and in these units the function is assigned to a single individual to perform them. Again we find that expertise and specialization are most important.

Recommendation. Because of the specialization required in these two areas, we concluded that it might be in the best interest of efficiency and productivity to Centralize Travel and Purchasing. We realize that in some areas this may not be a viable option, such as in Physical Plant, Marine Science, and/or Construction.

The Purchasing Office (USFSP) and Travel office (TPA) provide oversight of our units purchasing and travel practices. The committee suggests that there be further review of the area to determine if purchase order input could be transferred to this office.

- In central Travel and Purchasing offices, there will be separate individuals who initiate and process forms/paperwork. They will work directly with the unit representative to acquire the appropriate information to process their order/travel forms.
- They will serve as a Central contact for travel and purchasing and will have the necessary expertise by staying current on policy changes initiated by the University System.
- Other processes performed by these units might be:
 - Initiating travel
 - Vendor contacts/Vendor management
 - Invoice processing
 - Compliance
 - Issuing PO
 - Contracts
 - TER/TAR
 - Training (Source of information)
 - P-cards
 - P-Card reconciliation in individual units
 - Construction

We feel that with centralized travel and purchasing streamlined processes and efficiencies may be realized in each unit thus there would be a potential consolidation toward restructuring which may result in a one FTE reduction.

3. Human Resources. The Human Resources Office is a specialized area that provides support to every USF St. Petersburg unit; however, each unit has designated personnel that process search and appointment change paperwork for processing. The committee has identified other areas of responsibility that could use further review and possible consolidation.

- Attendance and leave for the university
- Increase compliance
- Leave audit
- Hiring guidelines
- Organizational development/ Training
- Delegation of pay distribution to units

Training emerged as a common theme among many of the written unit analyses from the committee members. It is important for our staff to have continuous training opportunities, both initial training and follow-up training, to maintain the high level of skills needed for them to perform their jobs. The potential benefit to USF St. Petersburg is consistent audit reporting and streamlining processes in individual units.

4. Budget and Accounting. In this area, we found that several units were out of compliance with University policy with regard to separation of duties. This appears to be primarily the result of lack of delegation of duties or lack of staff to whom to delegate these additional functions. We are concerned about this and urge review of all required processes and changes in all units to ensure compliance.

Recommendation. It was proposed, and supported by the committee, that a Consolidated Budget Team (CBT) of Academic Affairs, Student Services, and Financial Services be formed. The intent of the CBT would be to serve as the point of contact, and/or conduit, to the unit budget officer in each unit/division for budget planning and reporting purposes. In our discussions, it became evident that this is needed, and we view its purpose as fostering greater collaboration among all units at USF St. Petersburg. Areas that were discussed in detail during our meetings were/are:

- Reporting
- Reconciliation
- Training
- Foundations
- Capital budget
- Auxiliary budget
- Concession
- Risk management
- Student billing
- Increasing accounting services

It is the committee's conclusion that creating a CBT would improve unit alignment with the University's strategic plan, and aid in the following: a) adherence to the established budget calendar, b) increased financial reporting, c) separation of duties, d) management of centralized funds, e) development of financial strategies, and f) planned communication of information.

5.) Media Relations/Marketing. Each member of the committee had a good deal to say about this service area. We all agreed that current staffing in each unit is being over utilized to perform duties that relate directly to media relations and marketing functions. We believe that these functions should be managed and performed centrally, to avoid duplication of effort and resources. Some of the areas that should be handled centrally are:

- Web content management
- Coordinate advertising of programs, development of brochures, media campaigns for units
- Compliance with branding/consistent university messaging
- Special events/conference planning
- Commencement
- PR of all events
- Hobsons
- Training/tied to strategic planning

- USF St Petersburg alumni separate from USF Tampa

Recommendation. When each committee member reviewed this area of their unit, they were surprised at the volume of work done in each of the units, and in some cases, by multiple people in the units. One unit identified one FTE dedicated to media relations work. If the current office of Media Relations could cover the unit's needs in this area, they could eliminate the position. Our group expressed concern about whether or not the Media Relations/Marketing area could shoulder the work listed above. It was a shared our perception among the group that Media Relations would need additional personnel to achieve the group's recommendation. We also questioned whether or not the Campus Web master should report to this unit or to the IT unit on campus. The clear consensus was the level of service from Media Relations to the units needs to be improved in order before the committee can endorse this recommendation for additional staff. We all agreed that this unit is vital to the mission of the University and feel it needs serious review and development to achieve our university-wide goals of increasing student enrollments and establishing a public image/public presence.

Recommendations for Further Review. As a result of our discussion and study, we encourage further review of the following:

- Separation of duties
- Reconciliation processes and practices
- Compliance audits
- Streamlining computing processes (library, IT, computing)

On behalf of the committee, I want to thank you for the opportunity to bring together this group of valuable employees. As chair, I have been regularly impressed at the group members' abilities to listen, learn, discuss and suggest ways that the University might consider streamlining, consolidating, restructuring and eliminating staff in various areas as charged during this time of pending legislative budget cuts. To a person, each of the members took his or her responsibility seriously and made thoughtful observations and suggestions.

Should you need any further information from me or have any questions for the committee, we would be pleased to meet with you to share our views on any of the preceding issues and/or areas we reviewed.

Sincerely,



Vivian Fueyo, Dean
Chair, Ad Hoc Budget Council Committee

cc: Committee Members