



Ease the Transition to Shared Services with a Plan for Change Management Hurdles

Designing an organizational model that reflects campus priorities is an important first step in any shared services journey. But bringing this vision to life is more difficult than moving lines on an org chart. Crafting a shared services implementation plan tailored to the culture of your campus can help to reduce the impact of common change management hurdles.

In this Guide:

- 1. Deploy a multi-channel communication strategy
- 2. Codify business processes and staff responsibilities
- 3. Focus on customer service
- 4. Incrementally introduce shared services on campus
- 5. Dispel fears of the unknown among staff
- 6. Prove the ROI of shared services



Deploy a multi-channel communication strategy

Most campus leaders understand the need for thoughtful communication during shared services migrations. But too often they rely on one single message unlikely to meet the needs of diverse stakeholder groups.

An effective shared services communications plan should account for varied stakeholder segments, drawing on both standardized components for all audiences and tailored components for specific constituencies.

A multi-channel communication plan enables campus leaders to reinforce the rationale behind shared services and promote a consistent message. The plan should leverage a variety of face-to-face, on-demand, and proactive communication methods.

Review our expert insight on hallmarks of successful communications plans and download two supporting resources: sample FAQs and a shared services website audit.

Expert Insight

Fine-tune your shared services communications strategy



By [Gary Guadagnolo](#)

October 23, 2019 3 min read

Implementing shared services disrupts the status quo of work performed by administrators, faculty, and staff. But initiatives can stall when staff misunderstand the purpose of shared services.

In almost all cases, resistance stems from a set of common fears, most of which can be addressed through thoughtful, targeted communication.

Common shared services hurdle: Underinvesting in communication

While most campus leaders understand that implementing shared services requires significant communication, they often rely on one single message unlikely to satisfy the needs of diverse stakeholder groups.

Solution: Multi-channel communication plan

By developing distinct messaging strategies for different stakeholder segments, institutions

improve upon static communications approaches that do not account for those segments' varied needs and concerns. Whether interacting with groups or individuals, leaders must ensure that messages include both standardized components used for all audiences as well as tailored components designed for specific constituencies.

There's no such thing as too much communication

Four common staff fears about shared services

1. Fear of job loss. Administrative staff worry about downsizing and developing skills necessary for the new role.
2. Fear of losing control. Lack of input leads to concern about how reorganization will affect day-to-day work.
3. Fear of being left out. Administrative staff not involved in reorganization feel ignored and underappreciated by the institution.
4. Fear of Change. Long-serving staff worry about not only changes in their job function but also losing personal connections with those in home departments.

Across many channels, a single version of the truth

When preparing for shared services implementations, campuses should adopt **multi-channel communication plans**. This approach reinforces the rationale behind shared services and promotes a single version of the truth across a variety of face-to-face, on-demand, and proactive communication methods.

For example, at department meetings or town halls, project leaders or shared services champions can answer questions and respond to concerns. On-demand channels such as blogs and websites maintain official statements about shared services plans to which leaders can refer concerned staff, faculty, and other constituents. More active outreach channels like social media allow leaders to push information to constituents when plans change or when new information becomes available.

Effective communication plans are multi-modal, customized for each audience, and consistent across each channel.

Multi-channel Shared Services Communication Plan

Face-to-Face

- Roadshows
- Faculty Senate Presentations
- Town Halls
- Department-by-Department

On-Demand

- Blogs
- Websites
- Videos
- Implementation Plans

Active Outreach

- Newsletters
- Twitter
- Surveys
- Webinars



Elements of an Effective Communication Plan



Multi-modal



Customized for each audience



Consistent across each channel

At the University of Kansas, campus leaders successfully adopted a multi-channel approach to communicate the impact of shared services. Nine months before launching the first shared services center, leaders convened a town hall meeting to share details of the transition. 600 people attended in person, and it was also broadcast online. Subsequently, shared services leaders hosted monthly town halls to provide updates on the process.

Communication ramped up just before the launch with “roles and responsibilities meetings” for deans and administrative staff to review how processes would change. Shared services leaders also went on a roadshow to departments to address any questions. Finally, just after the launch, the shared services center hosted an “open house” to allow the campus community to explore the new facility.

The three main characteristics of Kansas’ communications plans are frequent and consistent communications, starts early (as soon as process begins), and ramps up just before launch.

Two supporting resources for creating a multi-channel communications plan

“When introducing shared services, communicate 10 times more than you think you need to. In other words, there’s no such thing as too much communication.”

Chief Financial Officer

Communication plans should be designed in response to the campus culture and the engagement levels of various stakeholder groups. Use the two resources below when creating a multi-channel communications plan.

- [Shared Services FAQs](#): Stakeholders raise common concerns during shared services implementations. Rather than spending time addressing each of these individually, consider developing (and posting) ready-made responses to the most frequently asked questions. Doing so frees up time for leaders to address more specific concerns.
- [Shared Services Website Audit](#): This audit calls out four principles of effective shared services websites, the components that bring them to life, and examples of each. Use this checklist when designing the online presence for your shared services center.



Codify business processes and staff responsibilities

Consolidating staff positions without standardizing the underlying work undercuts financial savings and quality improvements that can stem from shared services. Campus leaders should assemble practitioners and subject-matter experts to redesign standard business processes alongside a shared services implementation.

Expert Insight

Rally staff around process standardization during shared services implementation



By [Gary Guadagnolo](#)

October 23, 2019 4 min read

Many institutions rely on administrative “generalists” to support academic units across a variety of transactional business activities (e.g., processing payroll and new employee paperwork). Without central coordination of this work, business processes remain manual, complex, and undocumented, with wide variability from unit to unit.

Common shared services hurdle: Business process variability

Consolidating staff positions from across campus without standardizing the underlying work undercuts efficiency opportunities, as the same problems that plagued workflows in the previous structure have just moved to a different part of the organization.

Solution: Introduce process improvement at the outset of shared services planning

Campus leaders should facilitate opportunities for practitioners and subject-matter experts to design standard business processes alongside the shared services implementation, which has an additional benefit of inviting greater participation (and therefore buy-in) in the change process.

Shared services require untangling business processes

Alternatively, institutions that simplify, standardize, and (where possible) automate business processes as part of shared services implementations have the best chance of long-term success. In fact, the most effective shared services implementations share a common

characteristic: Leaders invest in untangling business processes in advance of or alongside organizational change, rather than assuming these processes were ready to consolidate as-is.

Consider the examples in the chart below. In each case, process improvement buoyed the shared services implementation. Leaders of these initiatives reported that, without deliberate process improvement, the shared services reorganization would have failed.

Business Process Untangled Alongside Shared Services Implementation

Institution	Shared Services Implementation	Process Improvement Support
University of California, Davis	Single service center launched in 2012; 75 support staff and support 180 departments	Process standardized and streamlined in lead-up to SSC roll-out; ongoing process improvement
University of Kansas	From 2013-2016, five SSCs launched to support HR, finance, etc.	All processes reengineered and standardized; staff retrained as “new” employees
University of Michigan	One shared services center created in 2014 to support finance and HR with 280 staff	Every process brought into SSC is reengineered with the help of stakeholders and tech experts
Emory University	Nine shared service centers of 155 total staff launched from 2013-2016, across 1,000 staff	Two years of interviews and current- and future-state process mapping

Campuses that focus on process improvement as part of the shared services implementation reap several benefits. First, inviting stakeholders to be a part of the solution by redesigning business processes and addressing common pain points is a tried-and-true method for winning over skeptics. Moreover, staff in both the shared services center and client units benefit from developing a process improvement mindset that can be deployed in all day-to-day tasks.

Bringing new processes to life

If old habits die hard, then old processes die even harder. For many staff—particularly those who have been at an institution for a long time—the workflow changes introduced by process improvement and shared services can feel revolutionary. If staff find a new process too cumbersome or different from what they are used to, they may revert to old ways. As a result, institutions should clarify processes and responsibilities alongside organizational change.

The University of Kansas’ shared services team accomplished this task by creating “scope of services” guides for each process that changed during the shared services transition. Drawing on process maps drawn for each of these workflows, shared services leaders articulated the responsible party for each step (i.e., the unit, the shared services center, or the central office).

They posted the scope of services guides on the [University of Kansas's shared services website](#) for quick reference and maximum visibility.

You can also download copies of the guides here.

- [Scope of Services- Finance](#)
- [Scope of Services- Human Resources](#)
- [Scope of Services- Research Admin](#)

The example below shows the distribution of responsibilities for the new hire onboarding process.

University of Kansas's Scope of Services Document for New Hire Onboarding

Onboarding Processes	Department Responsibility	SSC Responsibility	Central HR Responsibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Obtain required items and identification for employment• Orient new hires• Ensure timely entry to payroll system and other campus access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check that new hire has completed onboarding• Provide workspace, set-up, supplies, etc.• Monitor notifications that new hire is active	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitate transition between recruitment and onboarding systems• Initial orientation to campus• Take photos and provide parking pass	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finalize hire in the recruitment system• Review background check outcome• Key appointments into HR• Staff benefits orientation

University of Kansas shared services leaders also created a series of short, on-demand training videos for some of the most complicated new processes. The videos walk through practical, nuts-and-bolts procedural issues for each process and are accompanied by online quizzes. The results indicate to management where staff might need more training or support for a specific process.

The University of Maryland, Baltimore County also deployed process improvement in conjunction with a shared services implementation. As a final output during the transition to shared services, leaders created an accessible, searchable wiki called the Toolkit for Administrative Professionals, or TAP. TAP provides a "single version of the truth" for all UMBC administrative staff. Through this portal, staff can find detailed process maps for any process or activity. TAP links to online forms and provides reminders for those who are new to the process. TAP is also an interactive, living resource. Users provide commentary and questions in

response to articles. A TAP training coordinator monitors this feedback, responds, and develops additional training resources where necessary. The snapshot below shows some of TAP's most noteworthy features.

“Why would you want a shared services center if you're not going to simplify and standardize the work that's being done?” -*Chief Financial Officer, Large Public University*

Starting on the right foot with process improvement

In the private sector, shared services centers by design strive to continually refine and improve business processes. Higher education institutions have not always understood this fundamental capability, rushing to redesign org charts without understanding the underlying processes. Incorporating process improvement early in implementation reframes shared services as a vehicle for improving the work that happens on campus.

Research Highlights

Institutions that simplify, standardize, and (where possible) automate business processes as part of shared services implementations have the best chances of long-term success—and savings.

In fact, the most effective shared services implementations share a common characteristic: Leaders invested in untangling business processes in the lead up to organizational change.



Focus on customer service

Faculty often equate physical proximity of support staff with service quality. Consequently, they may fear that “distant” shared services hubs will prioritize central projects, controls, and costs over academic unit needs.

Incorporating two-way service level conversations into the implementation process—in the form of service level agreements, governance boards, and communication protocols—ensure that shared services units are responsive to the service expectations of client units.

Engage shared services customers in the conversation around service expectations and ongoing performance



By [Gary Guadagnolo](#)

October 23, 2019 5 min read

A growing number of higher education leaders, on the hunt for greater efficiency and savings in their administrative service delivery, are considering the viability of shared services for their campuses. Within recent memory, several shared services implementations have sparked well-documented campus upheavals—giving other institutions pause about consolidating administrative work.

Common shared services hurdle: Customer service skeptics

Faculty often equate physical proximity of support staff with service quality. Consequently, they fear that “distant” shared services will prioritize central projects, controls, and costs over academic unit needs.

Solution: Two-way service level conversations

Service-level agreements, governance boards, and communication protocols ensure that shared services units are responsive to client needs. Over time, shared services leaders use performance data to demonstrate that the consolidated organization is delivering high-quality services in alignment with customer expectations.

Customer service fears at the heart of resistance

Consider the history of shared services at the University of Michigan. The announcement in 2013 of a large-scale effort to move 275 staff out of academic units into a single shared services center sparked widespread faculty outcry. An open letter placed concerns over service quality at the center of faculty objections. They described shared services as “inherently flawed because its focus is on reducing administrative costs without taking into account the concurrent reduction in faculty and staff productivity, collaborative academic culture, and the unique needs of heterogeneous academic units.”

Customer-Focused Change Management Critical to Shared Services at the University of Michigan



Listening Tour

Formal feedback sessions with staff and faculty allay concerns about impact on transitioning staff and lead to creation of a shared service customer council.



Phased Rollout

Only 18 academic unit staff transitioned at first, minimizing organizational and faculty impacts. Remaining staff moved in late 2015.



Lean Redux

Transactional activities brought into SSC undergo a process review; staff trained in Lean to ensure commitment to continuous improvement.



61%: Increase in the University of Michigan’s customer service center favorability rating from 2014-2018

After a two-year strategic pause, a new leadership team at the University of Michigan revived the conversation about shared services. This time, they devoted particular attention to addressing service quality concerns. Shared services leaders conducted a listening tour among staff and faculty to understand their concerns. A shared services customer council was created to facilitate faculty and staff participation in the center’s governance. Shared services leaders also introduced a comprehensive customer service initiative known as Ridiculously Awesome Customer Service. The initiative trains all shared services staff to prioritize customer experience and service quality and equips them with continuous improvement habits to deploy in their daily work.

The University of Michigan also introduced Partnership Agreements with its client units. These agreements articulate roles and responsibilities for all participants across each business process; they also set collectively agreed-upon targets for timeliness and accuracy, with monthly reports of metrics. Collectively, this attention to customer service has led to an increase in the center's favorability rating from 25% of campus in 2014 to 86% in 2018.

Hallmarks of shared services customer engagement

The history of shared services at the University of Michigan and other campuses attests to the importance of engaging customers in setting service expectations. Institutions have succeeded in facilitating these conversations through several venues:

Facilitate conversations through several venues

- **Advisory Boards.** Faculty representatives, department chairs, and associate administrative deans meet monthly to provide guidance to shared services teams. The goal is to discuss customer concerns and develop recommendations for improving procedures, practices, and overall organizational structure. These boards help to assure some level of oversight for faculty-facing workflows.
- **Satisfaction Surveys.** Shared services administrators distribute electronic client satisfaction surveys with Likert-scale questions and open-ended responses to client units and staff. Questions typically address service quality and efficiency, staff interactions and knowledge, and procedural clarity and effectiveness. Shared services leaders aggregate the data by division and function and then use the results to chart improvement plans, where necessary.
- **Clear Lines of Communication.** Shared services leaders articulate a clear process for customers and other stakeholders to report concerns about shared services (e.g., discrepancies, confusing procedures, timeliness). At some campuses, shared services leaders meet monthly or quarterly with representatives of customer units to share updates and gather feedback.

Spotlight on service-level agreements

In addition to the examples above, service-level agreements (SLAs) are an effective tool in mitigating concerns about shared services priorities and expectations. SLAs articulate the service and performance expectations required from both the shared services provider and the customer. They increase transparency, foster communication, and provide mechanisms of accountability for both the service provider and customer. Institutions that have deployed SLAs report they have led to greater customer satisfaction, as customers equipped with clear expectations about shared services speed and accuracy are far less likely to be frustrated.

Since SLAs represent mutual accountability between the shared services center and customer units, representatives of both groups should be involved in their development. Stakeholders

involved in SLA creation often include the shared services director and functional area leaders, implementation team members, deans and unit representatives, and decentralized administrative staff. SLAs are typically developed after or in conjunction with the creation of KPIs, which play an important role in SLA design.

EAB has developed a resource to aid in the development and deployment of SLAs with the following components:

- A step-by-step overview of the process for creating an SLA
- An annotated SLA components list, with examples
- A simplified checklist that can be referenced while drafting an SLA

Building a service culture into the organizational structure

To ensure that high-quality service is an essential part of the shared services experience, some campuses have hardwired this expectation into their organizational models.

Consider the structure of the University of Louisville's shared services center, called Business Operations. When founded, Louisville leaders dedicated five of the center's 23 staff members to service-facing roles. These staff interact with customers through a "one stop shop" service desk.

This model benefits both staff and customers. Functional specialists who might not be energized about customer interaction can focus on maximizing efficiency of behind-the-scenes work. Meanwhile, the customer service representatives can work with clients to find solutions to unique problems. Notably, this model did not "cost" the university more in terms of additional staff. Business Operations simply specialized and separated customer-facing and transaction-processing steps to achieve an ideal outcome. Consider building these roles into a shared services model to ensure that customer service remains at the center of the initiative.

Three Types of Staff in the University of Louisville's Business Operations Center



▶ Executive Director for Business Operations

Management focused on responsive operational excellence and system maximization



▶ Functional Specialists

Transactional and system specialists with strong attention to detail



▶ "One Stop" Customer Service Representatives

Generalists with a strong service excellence focus

→ Customer Service Rep Role

Responsible for All Customer Interactions

Allows specialists focusing on transactional work (who may be less customer-oriented) to remain behind the scenes

Serve as Points of Contact for Business Operations Center Processes

Campus customers have a single contact for all services rather than a different contact for each service

Familiar with All Business Operations Center Processes

Representatives understand all services offered by the Business Operations Center and can easily direct customers to the right place

Source: University of Louisville, Louisville, KY; Business Affairs Forum interviews and analysis.



Incrementally introduce shared services on campus

Shared services has a bad reputation in higher education in part because early movers followed the private-sector “lift and shift” model, moving administrative personnel from units to the new organization all at once.

In most cases, top-down mandates and mass migrations to shared services are neither desirable nor practical. Instead, design a multi-year plan to migrate service delivery and staff to the new model. Gradual implementation proves to stakeholders that shared services can function effectively, garnering greater support over time.

Expert Insight

Introduce shared services incrementally, rather than with a “big bang”



By [Gary Guadagnolo](#)

October 23, 2019 6 min read

Except in rare circumstances (e.g., financial distress, wholesale ERP implementation), consolidating support staff into shared services all at once does more harm than good. To minimize the risk of stakeholder resistance halting migration efforts, leading practitioners incrementally introduce shared services. They begin with a smaller and more controlled environment to fine-tune shared services before expanding to other parts of the institution.

Common shared services hurdle: Ghosts of “lift and shift” shared services past

Shared services developed a bad reputation in higher education in part because many early movers followed the private sector lift and shift model, “lifting” administrative personnel from units and “shifting” them to the new shared services organization all at once. In most cases, top-down mandates and mass migrations to shared services are neither desirable nor practical.

Solution: Incrementally introducing shared services

Given that “big bang” consolidations are unrealistic, campuses should instead design multi-year plans to migrate service delivery and staff to shared services. This gradual implementation reassures stakeholders that the new shared services model can function effectively, garnering greater support over time.

Slow and steady wins the race

There are many advantages to a slow and steady, incremental transition to shared services:

- With clear communication and multi-year, advance warnings, units and staff have time to understand the implications of shared services and prepare. Staff can seek other positions or receive training for more task-specialized roles. Meanwhile, academic leaders can restructure roles so that staff remaining in the units can focus on value-add activities, rather than back-office, transactional tasks.
- Early movers serve as an invaluable proof of concept. Customers and staff who see the shared services center delivering on its promises of greater service and efficiency are more likely to adopt its services.

Incrementally adopting shared services usually proceeds along one of two paths: unit by unit, or process by process.

Incremental path #1: Unit by unit

In this approach, campuses pilot shared services within one cabinet member's control span and then expand to others after refining services, business processes, and organizational structure.

Most frequently, non-academic units are brought into the shared services organization first, given that reluctant faculty and deans are often the greatest hurdle to shared services migration. This order gives shared services leaders time to work out logistical challenges and establish positive momentum and a proof of concept, among other advantages:

- Administrative leaders often lack authority over support staff employed in the academic core. Staff in central finance and other administrative units belong to a more vertical organizational structure, making the reorganization easier.
- A limited reorganization provides opportunities to generate data related volume of work, labor intensity, and time to resolve issues. This allows for better benchmarking and estimates of future savings when introducing shared services elsewhere.
- Central staff can take the lead on standardizing business processes before rolling out the changes to other units on campus, providing immediate relief to frustrating workflows.

Alternatively, some campuses launch this adoption path by consolidating units that report to the provost. This approach establishes the pilot within areas highly visible to faculty and academic staff, signaling the support of the provost for shared services. Securing the buy-in of an academic champion is another helpful inroad into the academy. Consider the following suggestions for possible early adopters among academic partners:

Suggestions for possible early adopters

- **Shared Service Veterans.** Deans or other academic leaders with previous work experience at a campus with shared services can testify that the model can provide quality services while maintaining a high level of customer responsiveness.
- **Efficiency-Primed Units.** Some units (e.g., a school of business or engineering) might have a more natural affinity for the efficiency objectives and process improvement tools underlying a shift to shared.
- **Under-Resourced Units.** Smaller units unable to afford support staff may be plagued by coverage shortfalls, missing expertise, and compliance risks. Inconsistent service quality provides an inroad for shared services, which can provide support that units could otherwise not afford.

As an example of a gradual shared services implementation, consider the University of Texas at Dallas. The Central Business Office (UT Dallas’s shared services organization) initially recruited customers in central administrative units. It also took responsibility for faculty research startup packages, providing exceptionally high service and embedding advocates for the group within academic departments. This word-of-mouth campaign ultimately proved effective when a newly recruited dean heard about the Central Business Office from faculty. She eagerly handed over administrative support to the Central Business Office and redeployed budget dollars to hire new staff that could focus on mission-critical work, rather than transaction processing.

Winning Over New Arrivals Faculty at UT Dallas Recruit Dean into Shared Services

New Central Business Office Launch	Onboard Faculty Through Central Business Office	Staff Share Positive Stories About Central Office
In response to resistance to the shared services model, UT Dallas decided to make participation in the Central Business Office voluntary. The first units to join were administrative: budget and finance, president’s office, and communications.	New faculty are introduced to the Central Business Office as part of their onboarding process, so they become accustomed to using it and realize that it runs more efficiently than administrative services.	A new dean hears about the Central Business Office from faculty. Upon realizing the services she could receive at no charge, she accepts the support of the Central Business Office, allowing her to reduce the need for staff dedicated to transactional support.

In general, a unit-by-unit shared services implementation encourages non-client units to participate in the initiative by first proving that the consolidation of services lives up to its promises. There’s an important caveat to remember: voluntary participation reduces resistance to shared services, as unit and department leaders determine when transitions occur and can make internal organizational and staffing changes on their own. However, this “opt-in”

approach risks delaying meaningful scale. For that reason, some institutions choose to require adoption of shared services, but provide several years of advance warning that provides plenty of time for units to prepare.

Incremental path #2: Process by process

The other incremental approach for introducing shared services is process by process. The University of Louisville took this approach to consolidating services. When Louisville business leaders engaged in process improvement efforts for some of the most frustrating and “broken” processes, they found that each had transactional components best delivered through a shared services model. So when each process improvement project concluded, the shared services center absorbed the specific steps earmarked for standardization and consolidation.

Case Study: University of Louisville

Business Operations Center rollout begins with onboarding, with process improvement group had targeted for reengineering

Top 9 broken processes

1. Onboarding
2. Time reporting
3. Leave management
4. Position maintenance
5. Job changes
6. Additional payments
7. Expense transfers
8. P-card reconciliations
9. Program/account reconciliations



Leaders at the University of Louisville reported three major advantages of this process-by-process implementation:

- The entire university has a single way to perform the task, meaning that there are no old and inefficient business processes happening alongside the redesigned workflow.
- Delivering solutions to campus’s biggest pain points helps generate support for shared services.
- The shared services center could calibrate its staffing load and ensure it has capacity before absorbing processes. Unit-by-unit approaches sometimes run the risk of understaffed shared services, given potential reluctance of unit-based staff to move and the difficulty of calculating the right amount of staff.

Notably, a process-by-process rollout is more common among shared services centers supported by central strategic funds and offering a smaller menu of services. Often, these

smaller centers are created without moving any staff from distributed units. Institutions that pursue this approach tend to focus less on creating opportunities for cost savings through attrition or headcount reduction, as there is not enough work removed from any one staff person's plate to redeploy the entire salary line. Instead, this approach seeks to lessen the administrative burden of distributed staff, allowing some of that time to be reallocated toward value-add activities.



Dispel fears of the unknown among staff

Both staff who remain in distributed units and those who transition to a shared services center may feel anxious about stepping into the unknown.

Uncertainty about changing roles and responsibilities can undercut buy-in and spark damaging rumors about what is waiting on the other side of implementation. Providing transition pathways and offering support for staff (and unit leaders) to plan for the new model can calm these fears.

Expert Insight

Provide transition support to both department-based and shared services staff



By [Gary Guadagnolo](#)

October 23, 2019 4 min read

One of the most important elements of shared services implementations is ensuring that affected stakeholders clearly understand the fate of their jobs across the transition. Staff may fear their positions will be eliminated, even after providing decades of service to the institution. Some campuses falter by stating that position reductions are a primary goal of shared services, when any reductions will actually come from departures and retirements. Other institutions falsely promise no jobs will be eliminated or affected, perhaps overcompensating for concerns about staff and faculty resistance.

Common shared services hurdle: Fear of the unknown

Administrative staff who remain in units and those who transition to the shared services center may feel equally anxious about stepping into the unknown. Uncertainty about changing roles and responsibilities can minimize buy-in and spark damaging rumors about what is waiting at the other side of implementation.

Solution: Proactive transition support

Clearly communicating transition pathways and offering support for staff and unit leaders assures stakeholders that decisions will not be made without their involvement.

Smoothing the transition

Staff that have secured a place in the new shared services organization have concerns, too. They are frequently overlooked in change management plans, even though shared services may present as much uncertainty for them as it does for unit-based employees.

For both constituencies, providing clear transition pathways, support, and training helps to maximize engagement across the implementation process.

Constituency #1: Unit-based staff

The most difficult staff transitions to manage are among unit-based administrative generalists who perform duties across human resources, payroll, finance, and other areas.

During the transition to shared services, some unit-based staff will likely have part of their duties moved to the consolidated unit, leaving them with a gap in their workload. Without careful planning around staff transitions, units may be left with staff compensated at a full salary without commensurate duties. This scenario, if left unaddressed, undercuts the efficiency and savings opportunities introduced by shared services.



Consequently, during the transition to shared services, unit and department leaders should analyze current workloads and capabilities. To manage the excess capacity of unit-based staff, unit leaders can work with HR partners to restructure positions and potentially entire departments. Ideally, redesigning roles and duties should take place before the shared services transition to provide staff with maximum clarity about their future roles. Completing a workforce survey as part of the shared services design phase can help facilitate planning conversations.

Campuses that do intend to reduce positions have a number of tools at their disposal. Some create incentives for employees to exit the organization, opening opportunities to realize savings via attrition more quickly. For institutions that intend to keep all staff, leaders should clearly explain how individual staff may be redeployed or retrained, if necessary, so that uncertainty about their future will not lead to resistance. While time consuming to create, individual transition plans that explain how the campus will support the staff member, whether through retraining, redeployment, early retirement, or a buy-out, offer maximum support across implementation.

Constituency #2: Shared services staff

Staff moving from units to a consolidated service center may also question what awaits them in new world of shared services. Experienced campuses attest that perks, small and large, can smooth the transition and make staff feel more comfortable in their new roles. The University of Kansas, for example, allowed shared services staff to keep their chair (if wanted!) and phone number from their previous office. Shared services leaders hosted a welcome breakfast on the first day and designed a renovated workspace for staff to enjoy. More substantially, the university adjusted compensation so everyone in the center started at least at the same pay level in exchange for doing the same work.

Shared Services Perks

UNC-Chapel Hill: Provides staff with a welcome package, state-of-the-art technology, and standing desks

University of New Hampshire: Provides free parking for staff at remote location

University of Michigan: SSC director meets with each group of new hires

In addition to these perks, shared services leaders should invest time and resources to foster a common skillset among staff. This “basic training” focuses on developing skills that staff may not have learned in their previous units, like process improvement and a customer service mentality. The below share more details about these programs at the University of Kansas, the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Michigan.

Basic Training for Shared Services Staff

The University of Kansas	UC Berkeley	University of Michigan
Onboard staff as new employees	Run shared services “bootcamp”	Create service mindset through onboarding
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All shared services staff go through the same onboarding process, regardless of tenure<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Ensures all staff receive consistent messaging◦ Promotes team cohesion◦ Prepares staff with different backgrounds for new role• New employees are paired with a mentor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New hires in research admin service center go through boot camp, focused on skills staff need for current role and future roles• Two-month formal mentorship program• Professional development program broken into tracks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All SSC staff trained to incorporate Lean in their work• Learning culture emphasizes soft skills: improving service, managing difficult customers, communication, and collaboration• Goal to make all staff proficient within 90 days• Leverages business school’s “positive organization” framework

Research Highlights

During large-scale shared services implementations, all staff benefit from support and transition planning. While unit leaders may intuitively solicit HR support in designing new roles and responsibilities for their teams, staff moving to a shared services center are frequently overlooked.

Experienced campuses recommend offering perks to smooth the transition into new roles. Consider three examples of “shared services perks” below.

Shared Services Perks



THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

UNC-Chapel Hill provides staff with a welcome package, including branded items to promote a sense of team, state-of-the-art technology, and standing desks



University of
New Hampshire

University of New Hampshire provides free parking for staff at remote location



The SSC director at the University of Michigan meets with each group of new hires at the service center within the first month

Source: University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS; University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI; University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC; University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH; Business Affairs Forum interviews and analysis.

<https://eab.com/research/business-affairs/roadmaps/ease-the-transition-to-shared-services-with-a-plan-for-common-change-management-hurdles/#section1>



Prove the ROI of shared services

Campuses often struggle to document the financial savings, cost avoidance, and efficiency gains stemming from shared services. But in order to demonstrate the value of consolidation and identify areas for ongoing improvement, administrative leaders must continually monitor the performance of shared services.

Institutions should first select a handful of relevant key performance indicators (KPIs) for the activities performed by shared services. Tracking and sharing them via a simple dashboard or other annual reports keeps stakeholders informed about the center's operations and its commitment to ongoing efficiency and service enhancements.

Expert Insight

Track shared services efficiency and service metrics during and beyond implementation



By [Gary Guadagnolo](#)

October 23, 2019 3 min read

In the private sector, end-user resistance to shared services is typically counterbalanced by several methods: gainsharing incentives, “sin taxes” for maintaining local processes or shadow systems, and dashboard metrics that broadcast cost and quality gains. Although financial penalties are rare within higher education, more institutions are looking to run shared services “like a business” by [vigorously monitoring transactional metrics](#) and pursuing opportunities for continuous improvement.

Common shared services hurdle: Inability to prove ongoing value

In order to demonstrate the value of shared services and identify areas for improvement, administrative leaders must continually monitor shared services performance. However, institutions historically lack mechanisms for selecting and tracking core performance metrics, and often they are unsure how to begin organizing and evaluating data, even when it does exist.

Solution: Continually tracking and sharing performance metrics

Institutions should select a handful of relevant key performance indicators (KPIs) for the activities performed by shared services. Tracking and sharing them via a simple dashboard and

annual reports keeps campus informed about the center's operations and commitment to ongoing efficiency and service enhancements.

Using metrics to celebrate success, manage operations, and assess service quality

Investing in capabilities to track and report shared services metrics advances both internal and external objectives. These objectives include:

Benefits of tracking and reporting shared services metrics

Data about year-over-year transaction processing speeds and volume of work completed can be incorporated into regular reports. This information can help justify to stakeholders the investment in a shared services organization and mitigate faculty pushback. This data also proves the benefits of partnering with the shared services center to potential customers.

Using productivity metrics and transaction data, shared services leaders can track trends in work volumes and their relationship to processing time and error rates. This data can also be used to set quotas and identify staff who may need additional support or training to fulfill their duties.

Customer satisfaction surveys are designed to gauge campus opinion and solicit feedback on shared services operations. Results can help shared services leaders prioritize efforts to boost customer engagement or redesign business processes. Further, responding to quality concerns can help build trust that shared services is designed with the customer in mind.

Collectively, tracking performance allows shared services leaders to both celebrate "wins" and address areas in need of improvement.

You can't manage what you don't measure

Despite ambitions to track operational data, campuses often struggle to document the financial savings, cost avoidance, and efficiency gains associated with shared services. One of the biggest challenges is narrowing in on the best range of quality, productivity, and customer satisfaction metrics to track.

Common Types of Metrics for Evaluating Shared Services



Quality

Tracks how well employees are performing the task

Sample Metrics:

- Error rate
- Frequency of rework
- Average turnaround time
- Number of code violations



Productivity

Tracks how quickly work is completed

Sample Metrics:

- Average turnaround time
- Processes completed per FTE
- Time spent per process
- Cost savings



Customer Satisfaction

Reveals whether customers are pleased

Sample Metrics:

- Satisfaction with service center staff and level of service
- Number of complaints
- Improvement in customer satisfaction after service center implementation

Metrics are most useful when leaders compare them to baseline measures of efficiency and service. Even institutions that are not yet ready to undertake organizational change can begin tracking baseline metrics now to build a data-driven mindset and enable analysis later. In some cases, manual tracking or collection of data may be necessary to capture current-state performance.

The specific metrics that an institution should track depend on the processes that have been consolidated. Consider the following principles for selecting effective metrics. As shared services leaders begin to track these metrics, they can use dashboards to help visualize trends in the volume of work, labor intensity, and time to resolve transactions. While reporting tools can grow more complex with greater organizational maturity, start with tracking current performance against targets to enable at-a-glance assessments of current trajectories.

Metric Filters	Description	Rationale
Accessibility of Data	Information system should be able to readily generate metric data	Unrealistic to expect extensive manual data collection and analysis in timely manner for each metric
Frequency of Tracking	Metric monitoring should be conducted at regular intervals (quarterly or less)	Infrequent (annual) updates hamper ability to impact performance in real time
Reliability of Data	Data should be accurate, consistently defined, and measured over time	Absence of trustworthy data results in suspicion toward performance, often yielding inaction
Communicability of Concept	Definition and rationale for metric should be easy to follow and replicate, suggest appropriate action	Lack of understanding about metric drivers and relevance hinders managers' ability to inflect performance
Span of Control	Metric should comprise components solely within shared services center purview	Not reasonable or prudent to track performance against measures shared services center is unable to directly influence