# Essential Guide to Cost Containment Strategies for Higher Education

Begin by completing [a self-assessment](#) or dive into the **six core areas to contain costs and increase efficiencies** listed below.

## Labor Costs

- **Near-term rebasing tactics**
  - [COVID-19 Administrative Cost Containment Playbook](#)
    - Identify over 60 tactics —evaluated by savings potential, time to achieve savings, and need for union negotiation—to immediately contain admin labor costs
  - [Create a COVID-19 Financial Contingency Plan](#)
    - Use our five-step roadmap to create a tiered financial contingency plan that proactively identifies and sequences savings opportunities based on different financial scenarios

- **Longer-term cost containment tactics**
  - [Understand three vital steps to slow labor cost growth](#)
    - Understand the current state of higher education labor spending and learn how to implement the necessary cross-silo tools and incentives to achieve meaningful savings
  - [Creating cost-effective labor alternatives to support local leaders](#)
    - Pursue cost-effective alternatives to full-time hires, including central, cross-silo staffing that unit leaders can tap into when needed
  - [Leverage position control to prioritize resources](#)
    - Leverage position control to assess positions as they become vacant, reclaim staffing dollars when appropriate, and redeploy staffing lines to other units with greater needs
  - [Incentivize local leaders to find sustainable labor savings](#)
    - Incentivize unit leaders, who best understand existing processes and inefficiencies, to find sustainable labor savings within their individual units
  - [Four Proven Methods to Engage and Retain Frontline Service Staff](#)
    - Review four proven methods to boost frontline service staff engagement to increase productivity and minimize turnover costs

# Academic Affairs

- **Near-term rebasing tactics**

  - [Breaking the Cost-Quality Tradeoff](#)

    - Review the five primary drivers of academic costs and capacity and identify the greatest opportunities to realign academic resources while maintaining or enhancing quality

  - [10 "No-Regrets" Analyses Infographic](#)

    - Run these 10 "no-regrets" analyses to isolate the key drivers of academic costs, pinpoint opportunities for savings, and allow department leaders to better meet future student demand

- **Longer-term cost containment tactics**

  - [Align Workloads and Schedules with Student Demand](#)

    - Follow this roadmap to align faculty workloads and course schedules with student demand—and generate more student credit hours without adding part-time instructional staff

  - [38 Approaches to Maximizing Instructional Productivity Infographic](#)

    - Review 38 approaches to maximize instructional productivity on your campus, organized around four major goals for instructional productivity efforts

  - [Academic Vital Signs](#)

    - Require that every academic department monitor these three cost efficiency metrics to optimize academic resources and minimize costs

  - [Capture savings without cutting programs: How one institution found an extra $10 million for strategic initiatives](#)

    - Recoup funds for investment in strategic priorities by recapturing vacated faculty lines

  - [Implement Gainsharing Agreements in Your Academic and Administrative Units](#)

    - Implement gainsharing agreements to incentivize more prudent management of unit budget dollars

  - [Rightsizing the Program Portfolio](#)

    - Use our rightsizing the program portfolio toolkit to see four imperatives to lay the groundwork for principled academic program review and discontinuance processes

  - [The Multidisciplinary Reorganization Toolkit](#)

    - Consider whether an academic reorganization can advance your institution's teaching and research goals while also reducing overhead costs

# Workflow and Org Design

- **Longer-term cost containment tactics**

  - Efficiency and Effectiveness Initiatives

    - Review key lessons from post-Great Recession efficiency audits to identify successes to emulate and mistakes to avoid, and get guidance on where the majority of potential savings lie

  - Design Better Workflows with Five Process Improvement Steps

    - Follow these five jargon-free steps for every exercise to improve processes and design better workflows

  - Process Improvement Primer

    - Explore case studies of commonly broken processes across six functional areas to boost buy-in for process improvement initiatives on your campus

  - Shared Services Primer

    - Take our shared services readiness diagnostic to evaluate urgency and guide senior-level conversations about campus readiness to adopt shared services models

  - Design a Shared Services Model That Reflects Campus Priorities

    - Use our roadmap to design a shared services model that strikes a balance between efficiency of process standardization and responsiveness to units' service expectations

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

    - Use our roadmap to ease the transition to shared services with a plan for change management hurdles

  - Compendium of Shared Services Profiles

    - Use our Compendium of Shared Services Profiles to understand how peer institutions structure and fund their shared services models

  - Shared Services Maturity Model

    - Review the maturity model in our shared services primer to evaluate opportunities to enhance existing shared services models

  - Innovations in Counseling Center Staffing

    - Review three dynamic staffing models implemented by other institutions to more cost-effectively meet fluctuating demands for counseling services on your campus

  - High-Efficiency HR Department

    - Review best practices to building high-efficiency human resources departments that optimize operations and refocus staff on higher-level work

  - Shift from Annual Performance Management to Continuous Feedback

    - Access toolkits for improving the performance management process to increase staff engagement and reduce turnover

## Spend and Contracts

- **Longer-term cost containment tactics**
  - Procurement Functional Maturity Diagnostic
    - Evaluate your institution's strategic sourcing, spend analysis, and vendor evaluation and negotiation capabilities relative to other higher education institutions
  - Building Strategic Procurement Capabilities
    - Use our toolkit for building strategic procurement capabilities to identify technologies and staff investments to consider that will yield sourcing savings over time
  - Disciplining University Spend
    - Reduce costs by working with faculty and purchasing departments to revise policies to maximize on-contract spend and achieve greater efficiency

## Technology & IT Services

- **Longer-term cost containment tactics**
  - Project Prioritization Frameworks That Work
    - Use our project management prioritization frameworks to eliminate unnecessary projects and ensure IT resources are devoted to projects that best align with your institution's strategic goals
  - Mastering the IT Project Pipeline
    - Use this resource to gain control over chaotic project backlogs, develop a standardized project request process, cost-effectively filter project requests for further development, and shape customer project demand
  - Supporting Frontline IT Purchasing in the Cloud Era
    - Review best practices in supporting frontline IT purchasing to avoid duplicate licenses and ensure investments meet technical and security standards
  - Extending the Student IT Workforce
    - Consider opportunities to engage student workers to perform essential IT work beyond the help desk and develop a pipeline of future IT talent

## Facilities & Auxiliaries

- **Longer-term cost containment tactics**
  - Working with Academic Leaders to Maximize Space Utilization
    - Implement best practices in working with academic leaders to maximize space utilization and inflect behavior change
  - Compendium of Design and Construction Tactics to Minimize Total Cost of Ownership
    - Review our compendium of design and construction tactics to minimize total cost of ownership

- **Energy Reduction Strategies**
  - Pursue proven energy- and cost-saving strategies through the following levers: commissioning, recommissioning, retrofits, and continuous commissioning
- **Optimizing Outsourcing Arrangements in Facilities Study**
  - Consider opportunities to outsource parts of your facilities function—or optimize an existing outsourcing relationship
- **Optimizing Your Facilities Outsourcing Arrangement Roadmap**
  - See our four-step process for developing more effective outsourcing arrangements to help reduce costs and increase levels of service
- **Shift the Balance from Reactive to Preventative Maintenance**
  - Implement best practices to eliminate common timesinks and reprioritize critical preventive maintenance tasks
- **Improve Preventative Maintenance Performance**
  - Follow this roadmap for strategies on how to reduce the deferred maintenance backlog and invest in and expand preventative maintenance programs
- **Launching In-House Talent Development Programs in Facilities Management**
  - Use this step-by-step guide to reduce maintenance recruitment costs over time and increase staff productivity
- **Capital Renewal Funding Playbook**
  - Evaluate 10 executive-level lessons and 100 strategies for funding capital renewal to reduce your deferred maintenance backlog and enhance the capital planning process
- **Navigating Public-Private Partnerships**
  - Review 10 imperatives to effectively evaluate, plan, and implement successful public-private partnerships, as well as case studies of universities' P3 projects
- **Enhance Your Capital Planning Process**
  - Learn how to improve transparency in capital project prioritization to ensure investment in projects that best support broader institutional priorities
- **Capital Project Planning Toolkit**
  - Use this tool to quickly generate more accurate capital project cost estimates to help evaluate different options, or as a model for developing a campus-specific construction cost calculator
- **How to minimize future lab reconfigurations with flexible, space-efficient layouts**
  - Review tactics to minimize future lab reconfigurations with flexible, space-efficient layouts
- **Prototyping new campus spaces doesn't have to be complicated. Here's your two-step process**
  - Implement prototyping processes in space planning to ensure space design and equipment aligns with stakeholder needs

- [Taking Space Offline](#)
  - Learn how Bowling Green State University effectively aligned classroom inventory with curriculum needs to streamline deferred maintenance and reduce campus size
- [Auxiliary Unit Efficiency Cheat Sheets](#)
  - Consult our efficiency cheat sheets for auxiliary operations (bookstore, housing, dining, and parking) to increase efficiency and grow operation

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