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Summary:

Pillar 5 of the Cornerstone Plan, the Strategic Plan for the Academic Division of the University of Virginia, requires us to "Steward the University's Resources to Promote Academic Excellence and Affordable Access". In support of this mission and to uphold the goals of the Dean and the School of Medicine, this Operational Efficiency Committee has come together to establish and validate recommendations for improving operational processes while identifying opportunities. Operational efficiency is implicated across missions and daily operations. An outside consultant review in fall 2013 found many processes that are inefficient, and in some instances, ineffective.

Attached are the minutes for the main categories discussed:

HR
Administration
Finance
Space

Our findings have shown that there appears to be common threads with regards to:

- having multiple systems/entities
- decision making is not within the power of those who need it
- when decisions are made (if any), the decision making structure is extremely centralized and does not generally include end user influence or guidance

This committee expresses:

- that we request feedback and updates from the steering committee
- that this is the FIRST STEP and not the end
- that we are privy to what are the next steps and priorities
- that we are privy to what are goals from each group and how do we keep this critical thinking moving forward
- that we request that the Steering committee needs to see that action is called for
Report of the Operational Efficiencies task group meeting on March 27, 2014

Present at meeting: Michael Franco, Stephanie Bingler, David Brautigan, Cayce Fournier, Jaime Horta Coelho Mata, John Jane Jr., Kevin Lynch, Terri Washington

Absent: Mohamed Tiouririne, Jessica Hurley-Smith, Kimberly Kelly, Roslyn Kniss, Helen Norfleet-Shiflett, Paul Orange

Mr. Franco called the meeting to order at 4:02 PM and started by thanking Casey and Stephanie for their efforts in preparing materials for this meeting.

In a previous conference of the group co-leaders Franco, Bingler, Brautigan with Thea Grover-Patrick we have proposed to have a total of five meetings, every other week, on Thursdays at 4:00, each with one primary topic for discussion. The list of topics has been distributed. These meetings will all be held in room 7202 of the West Complex, the Center for Cell Signaling conference room.

As a starting point for today, we had an Excel spreadsheet listing eight items related to human resources (HR) that were subject of comments and/or recommendations in the Posada report.

Item number one, regarding an office of faculty affairs had already been taken off the agenda, because this has been assigned to the faculty task force.

It was suggested starting with item number five on the list in order to focus the discussion.

The group revisited earlier discussion about problems inherent of having multiple HR systems for medical center, UPG and SOM and stated it would be better to have a single operation with one set of rules and regulations.

It was pointed out that one had to consider the hiring and promotion of faculty under the oversight of the Provost of the University, which might be separate from other employees.

Some discussion ensued, leading to a consensus recommendation by this group that it would be best that there be a single unified HR system that would encompass the operations of the Medical Center, UPG, and SOM. Employees should be under a single HR system for hiring, compensation and performance review, especially for those who work together within the same clinical department.
Later in the meeting, in support of the spirit and intent of this proposal, the point was made that everyone who works here should consider themselves employees of “The University of Virginia” not some other unit or entity within the organization.

Someone posed the question what if complete unification was not possible due to external restrictions, such as state statutes or other conditions.

It was offered approximate numbers of current staff in the separate units to be 7000 in Medical Center, 750 in UPG, and 1250 in SOM. This provided us with some idea of the scale of the separate operations.

After some comments, it was thought that an alternative plan for both practical and legal reasons could be to bring UPG and SOM under a single HR operation, still distinct from the Medical Center.

There was some discussion of the differences between conditions of employment by Medical Center versus SOM, and how the disparities between the two can create tensions in the workplace. There are differences in vacation time and other benefits.

The SOM is seen as a more relaxed and less stringent, working environment.

The discussion was refocused on formulation of specific recommendations that would be the basis for improvement in operational efficiencies in the HR area. This led to three additional points where there was general agreement among the committee members.

1. **Employee relations and supervision** - there is a need for consolidated database of existing health system employees that would be both searchable and useful to generate reports. Supervisors need a single source of information to find internal employment histories, to access performance reports, determine whether disciplinary actions have been taken previously. If patient safety and operational efficiency are to be realized, then previous performance of employees needs to be readily traceable.

2. **Performance evaluations** – need for a new, much more simplified, single system for performance evaluations, to be done on an annual basis. At present there is an on-line system for setting goals and performance evaluations that must have been expensive to create and implement. No one defends the current system. It consumes far too much time and effort, is too complicated and cumbersome and shuttles forms back and forth. Most important, it is not generating useful information as a basis for any follow-up actions. There has been oversight/supervision of the process by HR that has compressed the range of scores and mandated group averages, distorting the process and output. Those responsible for evaluations need to be consulted in the design of the new system.

3. **HR staffing and training** - the HR operations need to be right-sized and more responsive to the needs of the end users. This will involve fewer employees who are provided with appropriate training, and adequate authority, to carry out critical functions. There should be an inventory
and review of staff who currently have responsibilities for different aspects of the HR operation. The numbers should be adjusted by benchmarking (i.e. FTE per number of employees) which is anticipated to reduce the total number. The right people, those with suitable skills, should be trained on a continuous basis by leaders of the HR operation in the SOM, and be provided with the authority for hiring, promotions, and disciplinary actions. We should seek to stop the current process where a letter for offer of employment goes through 4 or 5 steps of drafting and revision and authorization.

The group agreed to extend our future meetings to 90 minutes (4:00 to 5:30) and will meet again on April 10 to consider topics related to finance. Committee members are asked to discuss this topic with people they consider knowledgeable and bring concerns and recommendations for discussion by the group.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:10 PM.

Notes prepared by David Brautigan.
Ms. Bingler called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM in room 7202 of the West Complex, the Center for Cell Signaling conference room.

Motion to accept and approve minutes of previous meeting including recommendations on Human Resources was seconded and passed without objection.

Opening discussion described frustration at the inaccessibility and/or inaccuracy of financial data relating to the status of various accounts. Furthermore, generating multiple financial reports on a timely basis is currently a huge challenge that consumes inordinate amounts of staff time and effort. There is the Oracle database that apparently is lacking modern, efficient and user–friendly software tools to extract and organize data from that centralized database.

The failure of the current arrangement supports continuation of ad hoc “shadow” accounting and financial systems that are idiosyncratic for individual departments or divisions or centers. There is a clear need to be more efficient. Over the past several years the amount of work has increased and the need for data retrieval and organization is greater than ever. The University and SOM does not have organization based reporting, rather the system is currently tuned to individual projects.

About five years ago to align activities in UPG and SOM there was an agreement to adopt a vendor and a software system called CLARITY that has been used for prospective budget formulation, but CLARITY has proved to not be useful for generating financial reports.

Despite substantial expense and effort after > four years CLARITY is not performing the functions that are needed by SOM administrative support staff. It requires too much data input and most important it does not provide reports of what is needed.

The lack of performance has led to resistance to adopting CLARITY as a SOM — wide system. Furthermore we heard about the inability of a financial joint steering committee, composed of SOM and UPG employees, to come to a consensus of what tasks needed to be automated in CLARITY. This situation linked to the lack of an executive decision regarding expectations and milestones for software performance has allowed an untenable IT environment to linger in administrative units throughout the SOM.
The costs for inactivity has been substantial and continue to waste resources, demoralize staffs, and prevent effective planning and oversight of financial affairs.

Action is overdue and desperately needed. Comparison to peer institution SOM systems could be informative. There is some sentiment among administrators to drop CLARITY and contract a new vendor to build financial reporting tools.

First steps might be a census of what types of reports would be most valuable to have automated, based on the needs of the primary user group, e.g. department and division administrators. This short list should be used as the basis for a new contract relationship with performance parameters, launch deadline, plus training and support for implementation. The goal should be to have a single set of financial tools used by all units within the SOM working off a common database.

A separate but related issue is the relationship between UPG and SOM. There was a consensus of the faculty members that UPG has expanded its original mission beyond billing and collection for physician services. We are now in a situation where there is some organizational mismatch that impedes the effective utilization of common administrative and financial systems.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:43 PM.

Notes prepared by David Brautigan.
Report of the Operational Efficiencies task group meeting on April 24, 2014

Present at meeting: Michael Franco, Stephanie Bingler, David Brautigan, Jaime Horta Coelho Mata, Mohamed Tiouririne, Kevin Lynch, Roslyn Kniss, Helen Norfleet-Shiflett, Terri Washington, Jessica Hurley-Smith, Cayce Fournier

Absent: Thea Grover-Patrick, John Jane Jr., Kimberly Kelly, Paul Orange

Ms. Bingler called the meeting to order at 4:02 PM in room 7202 of the West Complex, the Center for Cell Signaling conference room.

Motion to accept and approve minutes of previous meeting on was seconded and passed without objection.

Topic for today is the rather broad issue of administration starting from recommendations in the Posada report. This encompasses areas of human resources, finance and information technology. Our group has already addressed two of these areas in previous meetings.

Opening discussion explored the different opportunities for communication between department administrators and the Dean’s office. It was mentioned that in the past there was one 2 hour meeting per month with all the administrators and the Associate Dean however this has been replaced with five or six different meetings each one more than an hour in length that has separated the groups and diminished the amount of discussion and information sharing made possible previously. It was mentioned that there is now a separate HR meeting, a RAM meeting for SOM, a RAM meeting that is OSP-directed, a finance meeting, and a CAC administrative meeting, plus a meeting for space considerations. In aggregate these meetings are consuming too much time and not providing value, for much of the sessions has to do with transmission of information.

It is recommended that operational efficiencies would be improved by having a single monthly 2 hour meeting of department and division administrators that utilize the face-to-face time for discussion of particular issues and best practices, with designated discussion leaders and specific agenda items that would be distributed in advance of the meeting. A single, better organized, more participatory, administrators meeting would be a significant improvement over the current situation. Fewer meetings of higher value.

Discussion then moved along to compare differences between SOM and Medical Center (MC) with the strong sense that the MC is much more effective at making decisions and implementing action plans. This is attributed to clear lines of authority and unambiguous (written) policy and operations guidelines.
There is a clear perception that the MC uses a hierarchical governing system, and in contrast in SOM there is a relative absence of a chain of command, which results in requests for action seeking approval at the highest level, often in the Dean’s office. The situation has evolved where divisional and departmental administrators have their work in effect duplicated in the Dean’s office. The sense of the group was that this has contributed to the proliferation of staff positions housed in McKim Hall (Dean’s office) as opposed to the individual departments.

There was a dissatisfaction voiced about how the numbers of staff and supervisors have increased substantially over the past several years, especially when compared to the reduced number of faculty members. The impression is that F&A funds have been to support expansion of the Dean's office ranks. It was pointed out that among the basic science departments, and within clinical departments, there has been sharing of positions and cross-training to support pre-award and post-award administration and personnel actions. This has had the net effect of reducing staff numbers and the level of service and support provided to faculty who are responsible for the SOM missions. In contrast, there's been growth in the number of staff positions in the Dean's office, which also was highlighted in the Posada report, in particular in the offices for human resources and finance.

This group proposes that the Dean's office would be more effective by providing support and training designed for, and with input from, the end-users, that is the department and divisional administrators. This would largely re-define the purpose and working agenda for the Dean's Office staff. The current super temp program is partially effective in providing basic training for new employees, many of whom are highly skilled; however there is a need for supplemental training in order for these individuals to be effective contributors. There is a frustration that in the SOM staff gets reassigned without adequate levels of retraining for new positions.

Overall, the operational efficiencies group reinforces some of the key findings from the Posada report, in that administrative functions and authority have become too concentrated in the Dean's office, with an accompanying expansion of staff and duplication of efforts. Reversing this trend is considered a desirable goal, moving to a more distributed system of administrative functioning and decision-making, with the Dean's office staff providing leadership guidance and training.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:27 PM.

Notes prepared by David Brautigan.
Space

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Report of the Operational Efficiencies task group meeting on May 8, 2014

Present at meeting: Michael Franco, , David Brautigan, Helen Norfleet-Shiflett, Terri Washington, Jessica Hurley-Smith, Roslyn Kniss

Absent: Thea Grover-Patrick, Stephanie Bingler, Jaime Horta Coelho Mata, Mohamed Tiouririne, Kevin Lynch, John Jane Jr., Kimberly Kelly, Paul Orange

Mr. Franco called the meeting to order at 4:08 PM in room 7202 of the West Complex, the Center for Cell Signaling conference room.

Motion to accept and approve minutes of previous meeting on 4-28-14 was seconded and passed without objection.

Topic for today is the issue of building space administration starting from recommendations in the Posada report.

Opening discussion reviewed the current practices, where the Dean grants what amounts to ownership of office and laboratory space to incoming (newly recruited) department chairs. This in effect is a package of resources granted to departments on a periodic basis and has come to be long-term deeds to space, regardless of needs that may fluctuate. That is a less than efficient arrangement, and there is no current mechanism for periodic assessment of needs or use of space, or any way for the reassignment of space, with the one exception of meeting the unit (department) performance expectation of $300/sq. ft/yr.

The committee members recommend significant changes from current practices.

This should include a new explicit written policy, with guidelines and standards for assignment and retention of space. An advisory or oversight committee would be especially helpful in moving towards that goal. The guidelines need to involve mechanisms for re-assignment of space, for return (surrendering) space assignments back to SOM, and linkage to SOM, Med Ctr, and University master plans for space creation and utilization.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:27 PM.

Notes prepared by David Brautigan.